

# **DEVELOPING A PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDENTS' UNION SABBATICAL OFFICERS**

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**Project submitted in part fulfilment of the  
Master of Business Administration**

**Bolton Business School  
The University of Bolton – May 2012**

## **PROJECT SUMMARY**

The aim of the project was to conduct research into performance appraisal processes for Sabbatical Officers in Students' Unions. Sabbatical Officers are students elected to serve as the political leaders of the Students' Union, and who take a year out of their studies or post-graduation to do so. Since the passing of the Charity Act 2006, Students' Unions have had to register as charities, so Sabbatical Officers have also had to undertake the role of a charity trustee, accepting the accompanying legal and regulatory responsibilities.

The project's research objectives first sought to identify the optimum elements for inclusion in an appraisal process outside of the democratic committee structures which govern the political processes of a Students' Union. Secondly, the objectives sought to identify if the legal requirements of the trustee responsibilities held by Sabbatical Officers placed any constraints on their performance management needs. Essentially, given their role as the governors of the organisation who also play a day to day role in the provision of services, what sort of appraisal or performance management process is appropriate to put in place?

A literature review was conducted to identify prevailing academic theories in the field of performance management and performance appraisal. The theories divided between two schools of thought: appraisal for personal development purposes and appraisal for organisation evaluation purposes. Also factored in was literature specifically related to the

management of charities and the wider voluntary sector. From this range of information a conceptual model was developed through which research could be undertaken.

The research was conducted within a realist philosophy using a case study approach. Three research methods were used: data line analysis, internet based self completion questionnaires and semi structured interviews. The research sample frame was the Chief Executives and Sabbatical Officers of Students' Unions in the North West and North East regions of England.

The research found that in practice, PA/PM systems for Sabbatical Officers had developed according to organisational context and for the most part were informal in nature. Key to the adoption of a successful PA/PM process was to develop a culture of feedback throughout the organisation, built on providing clear objectives for the Officers at the start of the term of office and providing regular opportunities for feedback on performance throughout the year. The research showed a preference for this feedback to be given in one to one meetings between a senior staff member of the Union and individual officers, and that it should focus more on personal development than evaluative assessment of performance. In some instances, 360 degree review processes had been introduced to assist with the feedback culture though the effectiveness of these was not clear. From the perspective of the trustee responsibilities, the research found that there was an acceptance of the need to appraise performance against the statutory roles and responsibilities, but that this did not necessarily hinder any other form of performance management.

Recommendations from the research included clearly establishing the feedback cycle for Sabbatical Officers; undertaking an objective setting exercise at the start of the year; identifying a schedule for review meetings; investigating a 360 degree review mechanism; and reconsidering the process for the Trustee Board to collectively review its performance.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Wes Haydock for his supervision of this project, particularly his rapid response to email queries and questions.

I am grateful to colleagues from the North West and North East regions of the National Union of Students for their contributions to my research. Particular mention should go to Matt Robinson, Jane Whalen and Peter Shilton-Godwin for giving up their time for the interviews, and to Martyn Williams for acting as my research champion in the North East region.

Finally, a big thank you goes to my wife and family for putting up with the last three years of Wednesday night absences and regular periods of stress as I coped with the demands of submitting my “homework”.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

## **About the author**

The author is currently employed as the Chief Executive of the University of Salford Students' Union (USSU), an unincorporated association and registered charity. USSU is a student-led, student-focussed organisation dedicated to enhancing the lives of students through representation, campaigning, lobbying, extracurricular activities and the provision of commercial services. USSU employs fifty five people across a variety of managerial, administrative and commercial functions. The author is accountable to the USSU Trustee Board and the role is predominantly responsible for the implementation and delivery of organisational strategy through effective management and leadership of USSU's human, physical and financial resources.

## **The area under investigation**

The issue under investigation is how to provide appropriate performance management and appraisal for specific members of the Trustee Board. Within a Students' Union, a pivotal leadership role for the organisation is played by a group of elected students known as the Sabbatical Officers. The Sabbatical Officers are elected by the student body to act as their political representatives, and to shape and lead the Students' Union for a period of one year. During that period, the Officers are full time employees of the Union. Primarily, the Officers are expected to represent the student body to the University, to the local community, and nationally within the National Union of Students. They also work to engage students in the activities and services the Union provides on campus, whilst ensuring that the Union is responsive to and shaped by the needs of those students. Accountability for their performance in this activity usually rests within the democratic

structures of the Union, where they would report on their work, whilst seeking membership support and approval for future courses of action, particularly in their political role. The democratic structures can vary from Union to Union, but usually include some form of student council or assembly which is responsible for debating and approving the representation policies and activities undertaken by the Officers.

The democratic process does not allow for, nor is it intended to provide, any form of formal performance management or appraisal of the Officers' work. The democratic structures are more suited to political appraisal of Officer performance, akin to a parliamentary select committee, rather than identifying personal development needs and objectives that are aligned to the strategic direction of the organisation. The Officers are legally regarded as employees of the Union (NUS, 2007 and 2011) and are expected to contribute to the strategic development and performance of the Union. However unlike other employees, the Officers are also Trustees of the Union and thus have to play a strategic and governance role within the organisation too.

The Charity Act 2006 created a requirement for Students' Unions to become fully registered charities with the Charity Commission. As a consequence, many Unions formally reviewed their governance structures creating Trustee Boards to sit above the democratic structures. As the elected student leaders of the Union, most Sabbatical Officers are automatically members of the Trustee Board. The role of a Trustee places a set of legal obligations on the Officers with regard to their stewardship of USSU as a charity which, if poorly managed, could lead to significant conflicts of interest arising. As a trustee, the Officers are accountable to the Board of Trustees and obliged to act in the

best interests of USSU at all times (Charity Commission, 2009). Key within that role is the need to act as the employer of the permanent staff team. Consequently, the Officers do not have a line manager and as they only work for the Union for a year, do not have to demonstrate continuous improvement in their performance against objectives year on year through the Union's performance appraisal process. However, they do set themselves objectives for their year in office, and are expected to work as a team to deliver those objectives.

### **Strategic Significance**

Human resource management (HRM) literature debates at some length the benefits to an organisation of providing performance management and/or performance appraisal where an organisation seeks a strategic integrated approach to personnel practice (Bach, 2005). USSU implements performance appraisal throughout the permanent staffing structure on an annual basis, and links individual objectives to the achievement of the strategic plan from the Chief Executive down through the management team and beyond to front line employees. Within USSU, although a formal appraisal takes place on an annual basis there is an ongoing process of performance management for all employees encompassing reviews not only of outputs and outcomes but also of individuals' performance in terms of upholding and living the values of the USSU in achieving those outcomes. Bach (2005) views such a process as shifting performance appraisal from being an annual process to becoming a key driver in enhancing overall organisation performance.

This being the case, the lack of a formal performance appraisal and management structure for the Sabbatical Officers could risk those four individuals, and the organisation, being unable to identify how they contribute to organisational performance. If the Sabbatical Officers perceive that the organisation is not moving in the same direction as they are, then there is a risk of the officers feeling a sense of alienation from the rest of the organisation. Given the key leadership role the Officers play both as Trustees and political representatives, it is vital that their objectives and performance are aligned with the overall direction of the organisation and, indeed, contribute to setting that direction.

Furthermore, although USSU has no specific competition and therefore is not necessarily concerned with aiming to achieve a sustained competitive advantage over other organisations, the Charity Commission expects well governed charities to be focussed on impact and outcomes (Charity Commission, 2008). USSU uses a series of performance indicators to measure its impact and outcomes, but the nearest comparison it makes to achieving sustainable competitive advantage is to measure whether it has made a positive impact on the lives of its members. At the very least, the Sabbatical Officers deserve to have their contribution to USSU appraised to ensure such a positive impact is being achieved.

In addition, many of the individuals who take on the role of a Sabbatical Officer are often aged in their early twenties and have little previous workplace experience, particularly in high profile leadership roles. Aside from the organisational responsibilities outlined above, the role offers an incredible personal development opportunity compared to individuals who have graduated at the same time, particularly when set against the current highly

competitive graduate employment market place. As these individuals are often only in office for one twelve month period (with an absolute maximum of twenty four months permissible by law), then arguably they need to be able to understand and articulate to future employers the personal development opportunity they have been through when seeking further employment. Without a constructive and objective review and appraisal of their performance and personal development, the competitive advantage the role may provide for those individuals in the graduate job market could be lost.

### **Research Question and Objectives**

How can a performance appraisal model be developed for Sabbatical Officers that enables them to contribute effectively to organisational performance whilst respecting their role as Trustees and elected political representatives?

1. To investigate the optimum elements required in structuring performance appraisal of Sabbatical Officer roles outside of the democratic process.
2. To critically evaluate how the requirements of the trustee role affect the performance management needs of Sabbatical Officers.
3. To propose a performance appraisal model for Sabbatical Officers and make recommendations about its implementation.



**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter will review the academic literature around the use and style of performance appraisal, relating it to the wider issue of performance management. The chapter will close with a synthesis of the issues into a conceptual framework.

## **2.1 Performance Appraisal Defined**

Morris et al (2007) note that performance appraisal (PA) was once a basic system of producing an annual assessment of a subordinate's performance, yet has come to be seen as encompassing a variety of processes to assess employees, encourage their development and distribute rewards. Boxall and Purcell (2011) reinforce this view by describing PA as “among the most complex kinds of HR practice” given that it is a “nexus” of a variety of HR practices. Further, Boxall and Purcell (2011) caution that treating PA as a single practice risks making a fundamental error in understanding and locating it within an organisation.

Through a series of empirical studies, Piggot-Irvine (2003) mapped all the elements of an essential appraisal process (figure 2.1). This model clearly establishes what the cultural tenets of a PA process should look like. It appears predicated on an assumption that it could be applied to any organisational context, whereas Boice and Kleiner (1997) assert the need for a contingency based approach. Respect, openness and trust are highlighted as the most important elements from the model (Appelbaum et al, 2011), suggesting that they should be present at all times between managers and employees, going on to state that to facilitate these elements, feedback should be given regularly - a view corroborated by others (Kuvaas, 2011; Heathfield, 2007; Boice and Kleiner 1997).

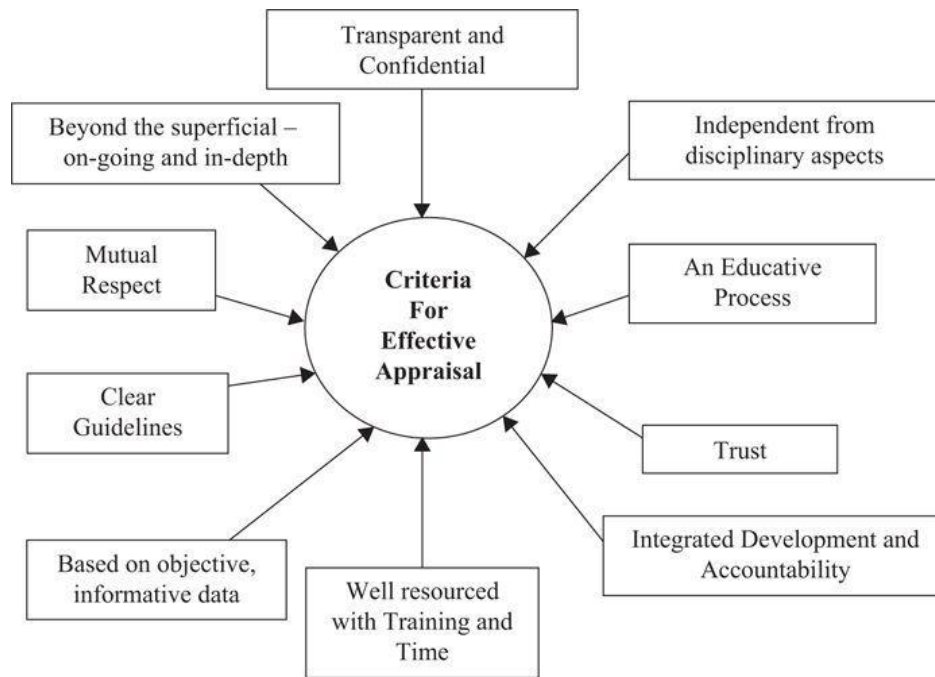


Figure 2.1, Features of an effective appraisal system (Piggot-Irvine 2003, cited in Appelbaum et al, 2011)

The literature has developed over time so that it discusses PA as located within the wider process of performance management (PM) (Millmore et al, 2007; Piggot-Irvine, 2003). Marchington and Wilkinson (2008) identify PM as a process that links individual goals, departmental purposes and organisational objectives with wider human resources management (HRM) activities in order to ensure work is arranged in a manner that achieves the best results, with PA being a component of the wider PM process. Millmore et al (2007) reinforce this view through stating that PA is now viewed as a component of PM, whilst noting that it is a narrow viewpoint that sees PM simply as a process of defining performance indicators and setting them as targets to be reviewed and appraised. They argue that it is impossible for PM to achieve its full potential without it aligning with organisational strategy. However, they temper their own assertion by identifying that embedding a PM system is no guarantee that it will deliver the organisation's strategic objectives through a successful HRM strategy without careful

thought about the organisational context, and the method of introduction and execution (Millmore et al, 2007).

Boselie (2010) expands this notion by discussing PM as a system offering a sophisticated evaluation of employee contributions to an organisation, bringing together a range of activities aimed at a convergence of employee and organisational performance. An annual PA is viewed as one such activity alongside goal setting, goal evaluation and personal development planning (Boselie 2010). This view is complemented by a CIPD (2005) survey identifying around 87% of respondents using PA as an element of PM. Boselie's (2010) PM model can be represented as a continual cycle (figure 2.2). It would be fair to expect that Piggot-Irvine's (2003) PA features would be present in such a cycle if the process is to be a success. Whilst the model is mono-causal in nature, assuming that following the cycle will ultimately increase performance and achieve goals, it clearly places PA as belonging within a wider PM process.



Figure 2.2, Boselie (2010) Performance Management Cycle

Conversely, Pointon (2010) argues that universally aligning PA with PM obscures the important differences between the two notions: PA assesses the individual employee effort and achievements that contribute to a wider PM approach (Pointon, 2010) and acquires the information to enable that assessment to take place (Hannay, 2010). Taking these definitions into account, PA literature begins to divide in two: developmental appraisal of behaviour compared to evaluative appraisal of performance, with both views considering if PA becomes then a means of exercising organisational control (Chen et al, 2011; Taylor, 2008; Bratton & Gold, 2007; Millmore et al, 2007; Morris et al 2007).

## 2.2 Developmental Appraisal

Developmental appraisal is focussed on the notion that organisational performance improves as employees' own performance improves, and that this is achieved through regular reviews of the way in which people work rather than an evaluation of outputs (Chen et al, 2009, Armstrong, 2001). This view regards the PA process as being something that happens more than once a year (Armstrong, 2001; Marchington and Wilkinson, 2008), possibly blurring the line between PA and PM. There exists a focus on the need for clear expectations of behaviours and the job role itself to be articulated at the beginning of the cycle, backed up by continuous review and punctuated by an annual PA process. Bell (1994) identifies a developmental PA cycle, though it possesses some evaluative characteristics.

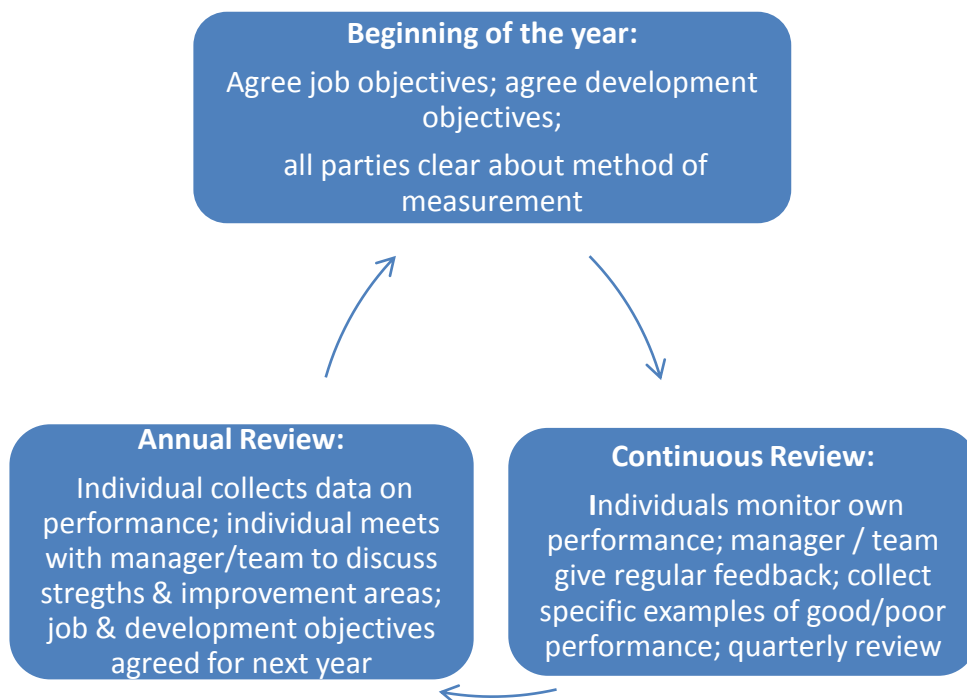


Figure 2.3, Developmental Appraisal system summary, adapted from Bell (1994)

The model provides a simple cycle of PA within a PM context, focussed on developing the individual's ability to perform. However it relies on an assumption that all parties are always in agreement on the direction of travel, and on an assumption that a clear organisational vision and strategy exists against which the annual development plan can be produced. In addition, the notion of developmental PA becomes more one of a developmental PM system with a strong PA at its core. This view was later corroborated by Armstrong (2001) who proposed a similar PM cycle (figure 2.4).

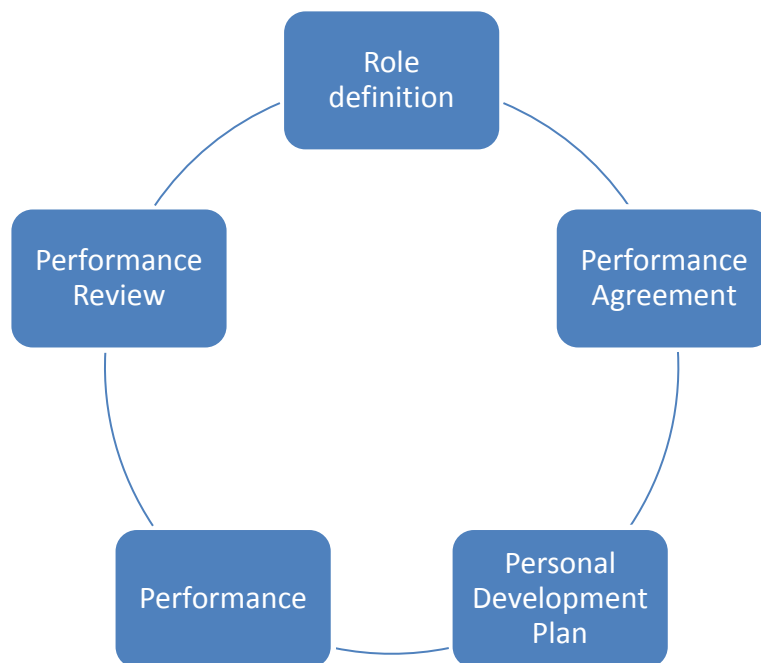


Figure 2.4, Armstrong's (2001) Performance Management Cycle

Armstrong's cycle is essentially reductionist in nature, based on an assumption that the process can be conducted as shown without much more specification, particularly when compared to Bell's (1994) model. Equally, it shares the same assumption over the prevailing ability within the organisation to clearly define roles and performance standards at the beginning of the process. What both models do offer however is an indication that

for developmental PA to have impact and be successful, requires a wider organisational commitment to PM. Both models could be seen as antecedents of Boselie's (2010) PM cycle.

Heathfield (2007:6) justifies "PA within developmental PM" by arguing that an evaluative PA process

*"reflects and underpins an old fashioned, paternalistic, top down, autocratic mode of management"*

Further, she develops the simple PM cycles above in line with Kuvaas (2010) and Piggot-Irvine (2003)'s definitions by indicating the importance of regular feedback: discussing personal development in addition to organisational goals, derived from multiple sources (Heathfield, 2007; Schraeder et al 2007; Boice & Kleiner, 1997). This multi-source approach is discussed as 360 degree PA, the term describing the all around collation of feedback from peers, subordinates, managers and external contacts (Redman and Wilkinson, 2009). 360 feedback is often identified as key to developmental PA, but not when used outside a broader PM structure (Morgan et al, 2005) or without a high feedback culture being present (Kuvaas, 2011; Garavan et al 1997). If successful, the capture of varying views and perspectives on someone's performance increases the likelihood that the evaluative outcome is rounded and correct, and of more productive benefit to the individual and the organisation (Boselie, 2010; McKenna and Beech, 2008).

An alternative view of developmental PA is that it is as controlling in tone as the evaluative style. Bach (2005) discussed the view of Townley (1999) that any form of appraisal is an



extension of organisational control. Townley's view is that those PA processes that purport to a developmental focus are linked to the Foucauldian principles of individual control through unobserved surveillance (Redman and Wilkinson, 2009), arguing that a 360 appraisal is similar in notion to the Panopticon method of observing prisoners (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2008; Bach, 2005). Kuvaas (2007) corroborates this opinion by demonstrating through research that some individuals experienced developmental PA as controlling, particularly where those individuals are used to a high degree of autonomy in other areas of their work. In turn, this could have a negative effect on work performance as those individuals developed a perception of a lack of trust in their work (Kuvaas, 2007).

Hannay (2010) proposes a model of PA that appears evaluative but centres on being developmental, linked to a wider PM cycle. Here, PM is borne out of three elements: performance planning and goal setting regular coaching and feedback; and an annual evaluation (Hannay, 2010). Formal evaluation is based on Noe's (2010, cited in Hannay, 2010) three purposes of PA: collecting information for personnel decisions, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and linking performance and organisational strategy.

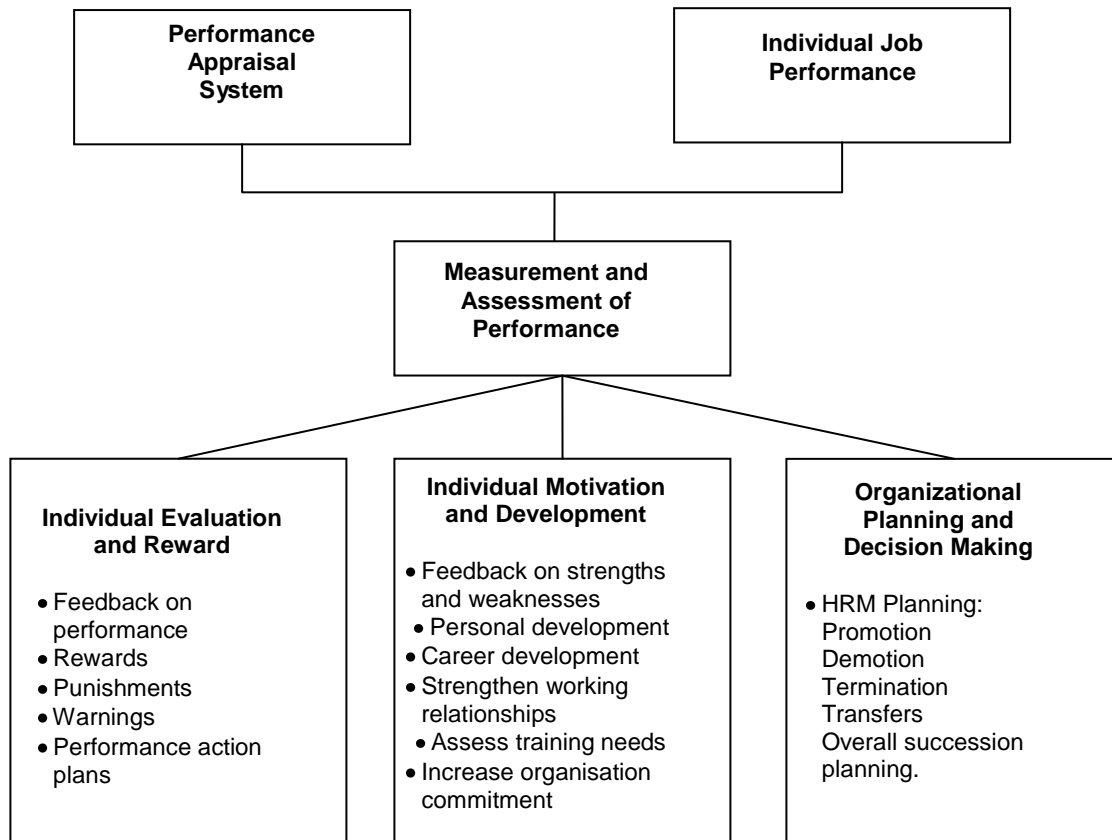


Figure 2.5, Performance Appraisal Process Model (Hannay, 2010)

The model's strength is that, subject to the method used to measure and assess performance it bridges developmental and evaluative dimensions of PA, yet clearly sits as part of a wider, organisational PM approach. However, it suffers from a lack of definition for the method of assessment. Within the focus of this research, the elements of evaluation / reward and planning / decision making could be deemed superfluous as the Sabbatical Officers' role is that of office bearer for a period fixed in time and remuneration. In contrast, the motivation / development aspect offers a useful dimension of analysis for developmental PA.

### **2.3 Evaluative Appraisal.**

Redman and Wilkinson (2009) suggest that harder evaluative appraisal processes are on the increase at the expense of the development approach. However, many traditional appraisal schemes are underpinned by an evaluative methodology in that,

*“management of employee performance is limited to aspects that supervisors can influence”*

(Schraeder and Jordan, 2011:7).

Randall (1994, cited in Bratton and Gold, 2007) noted a basic process behind most evaluative schemes based on defining work, setting targets, performance, and assessment against targets. Other authors had expanded this reductionist process and set it in a wider PM context. Bevan and Thompson (1992, cited in Bach, 2005 and in

Redman and Wilkinson, 2009) expand it into five steps that link to Boseline's (2010) PM cycle. The additional steps recognise the developmental dimension to PA.



Figure 2.6, Evaluative appraisal process, adapted from Bach (2005)

The difficulty with the Bevan and Thompson (1992) model is that it is at heart an “N-Step process” (Collins, 1998), based on an assumption that PA can be conceptualised into a number of sequential phases that occur in an orderly manner. The issue with that assumption is that it takes no account of what happens when human interaction is introduced to the process leaving it relatively under-socialised. The model relies on the process of PA being predictable and therefore easily broken down into component steps. The reality is that the model offers little more than guidance to a PA process. It is arguable that participants would find this a mechanistic experience moving from one phase to another without deriving personal or organisational value from the experience.

Millmore et al (2007) present a model of performance measurement applied through the Civil Service Management board, noting that the election of the Labour government in 1997 prefigured an increased focus on PM in the public sector. The model is an

archetypal presentation of PA through evaluation of performance (figure 2.7), though arguably it is overly focussed on inputs rather than outcomes through a focus on measurement and evaluation rather than management (Millmore et al, 2007)

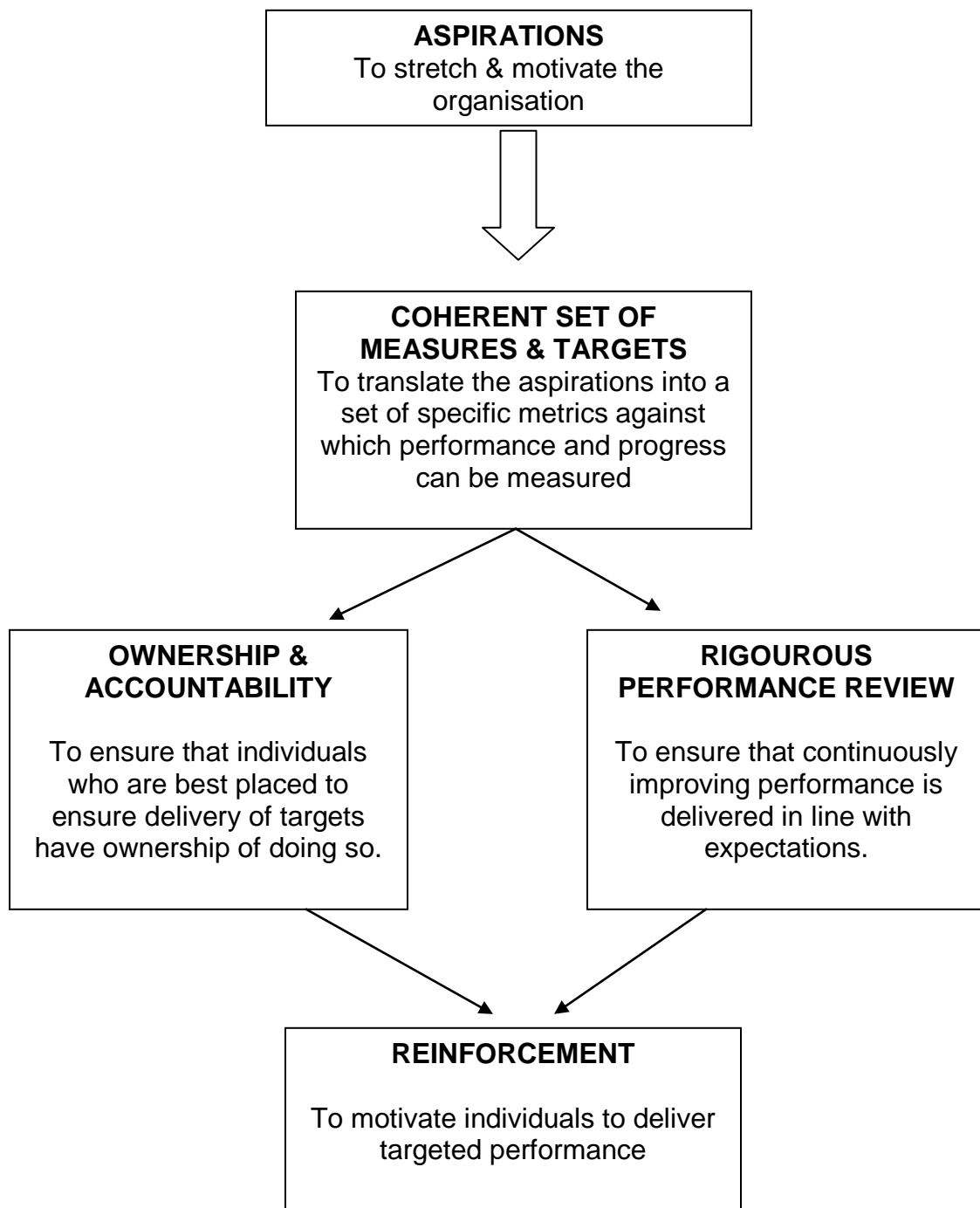


Figure 2.7, Civil Service Management Board Performance Measurement Model, adapted from Millmore et al, (2007)

In addition, the Civil Service model (Millmore et al, 2007) has other shortcomings. As with the Bevan and Thompson (1992) model above, it is under-socialised, through an assumption that everyone working under the model is in agreement with the procedures it seeks to impose. The key weakness is that it relies on those individuals who are supposed to deliver the targets feeling a sense of ownership towards the outcomes. However, as Radnor and McGuire (2004, cited in Millmore et al 2007) noted, invariably those delivering the targets had no role to play in creating or setting the targets and thus took no ownership at all towards their achievement. Thus the lower half of the model would appear to have no value or impact on the PM process.

Brown et al (2010) accept that evaluative PA has value, viewing the process being designed to positively impact on employee behaviours leading to improved organisational performance. It is arguable that this process is not enough in itself, it must also possess sufficient quality in execution (Brown et al, 2010; Schraeder and Jordan, 2011). When employees believe the PA process has been procedurally fair, they are more accepting of the judgements and outcomes the process bestows upon them (Chen et al, 2011; Thurston and McNall, 2010). The negative experience and critique of the Civil Service Management Board model above (Millmore et al, 2007) adds weight to this argument. It would seem then that fairness is as key to an evaluative driven PA as it is within Piggot-Irvine's (2003) initial definition.

Criticism of evaluative PA is that it can result in a quantitative process relying on a checklist approach (Pointon, 2010), resulting in PA that seeks to test conformity with proscribed behaviours and objectives (Torrington et al, 2011), and providing opportunities for managers to reinforce organisational values (Redman and Wilkinson,

2009), thus in turn acting as a means of organisational control (Bach, 2005). As in developmental PA, there is an increasing focus on the use of multi-rater approaches to collecting data on employee performance (Newbold, 2008) to deliver procedural justice (Thurston and McNall, 2010). Criticism of multi-rater approaches notes that as many drawbacks and biases exist as within top down evaluation processes, particularly when subordinates are required to rate a manager (Torrington et al, 2011; Millward et al, 2010; Drew, 2009; Taylor, 2008).

## **2.4 The Trustee Dimension**

Criticism of both evaluative and developmental PA comes through the view that the process is ethically inappropriate (Bach 2005, Prowse and Prowse 2009), requires managers to supervise rather than lead thus producing a subordinated working relationship (Taylor, 2008; Bach, 2005) and diminishes organisational flexibility (Nickols, 2007). Within the focus of this research is the need to recognise that the individuals to be appraised are not only employees: through their trustee role they are office-bearers, employers and political leaders of the organisation. In this context the ethical critique of PA holds some weight. The trustee role offers a different dimension to PA. Pointon (2010) identifies a framework called a “conversation with purpose” used by the CIPD for appraising the contribution of board level volunteers to organisational performance (table 2.1 and figure 2.8).



<b>COMPETENCY</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
Strategic Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting vision, values &amp; purpose</li> <li>• Identifying resources</li> <li>• Thinking &amp; planning strategically</li> </ul>
Business Judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weigh evidence &amp; analyse ideas</li> <li>• Reach independent &amp; objective conclusions</li> <li>• Understand complex financial information</li> <li>• Assimilate information quickly</li> </ul>
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure integrity &amp; probity in execution of management</li> <li>• Display those qualities in the role</li> </ul>
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work supportively &amp; build team cohesion</li> <li>• Constructively probe, challenge, &amp; add value to organisational performance &amp; direction</li> </ul>

Table 2.1, Competency framework for volunteer board members, adapted from Pointon (2010)

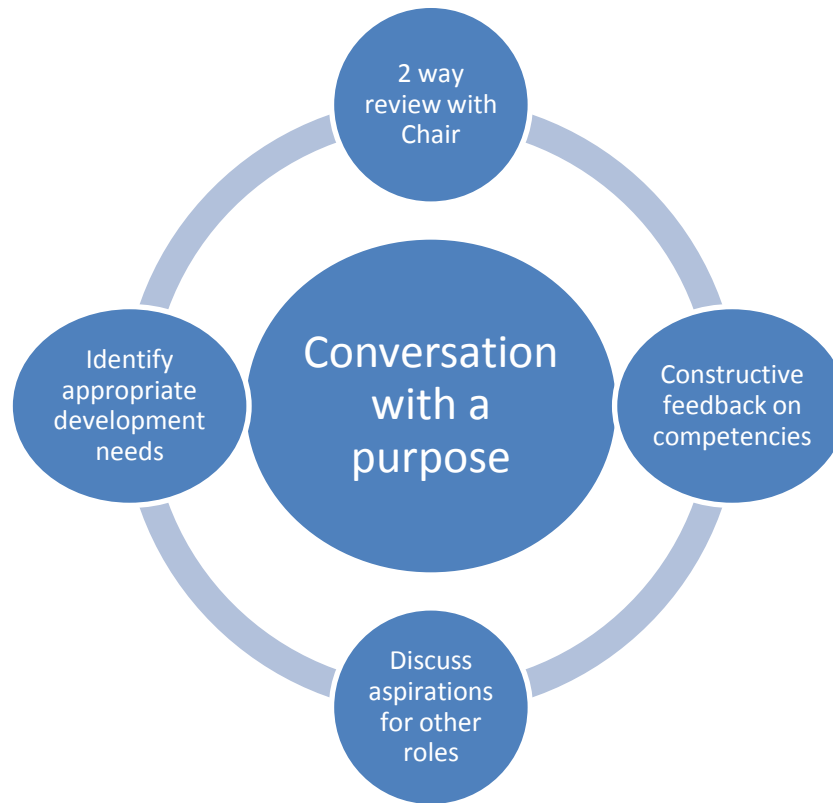


Figure 2.8, Performance review process for volunteer board members, adapted from Pointon (2010)

This process is complemented by the best practice guidelines of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) (2010) and the Charity Commission (2008) creating standards by which trustee performance can be measured. Pointon (2010) and the NCVO / Charity Commission (2010/2008) standards can be seen as supporting developmental PA. The informality of the process risks bias and subjectivity, though the non-managerial nature of the conversation's inter-relationships would provide some mitigation against those factors. This process complements and adds value to Hannay's (2010) individual motivation / development aspect of PA. It would be difficult within the context under review for anything other than a developmental PA approach to be utilised given the subjects' role as leaders of the organisation. Equally, the question

would exist as to who should hold the conversation as everyone else in the organisation is technically subordinate to those roles.

<b>Trustee Standard</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Safeguard & promote the values and mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting out the long term direction</li> <li>• Uphold the values</li> <li>• Support delivery of the aims &amp; objectives</li> </ul>
Determine strategy & structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are values &amp; mission translated into aims &amp; activities?</li> <li>• How are structures &amp; processes developed to implement them?</li> </ul>
Be effective, responsible & accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the organisation legally compliant?</li> <li>• Is the organisation well managed?</li> <li>• Is the organisation meeting its aims and objectives &amp; upholding its governing document?</li> </ul>
Exercise a duty of prudence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the charity is and remains solvent</li> <li>• Avoid activities that may place the organisation at undue risk</li> <li>• Are resources being used reasonably to further the aims and objects?</li> </ul>
Make sure the board of trustees functions effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the board acting in the best interests of the organisation?</li> <li>• Are the board acting as a team?</li> </ul>

Table 2.2, Performance standards for Trustees, adapted from NCVO (2010) and Charity Commission (2008)<sup>b</sup>

## 2.5 Conceptualising a Framework for Analysis

As the focus of this study is to identify a performance appraisal process that respects the Trustee role of the individuals whilst enabling them to identify how they are contributing to organisational performance, no single model from the literature is

applicable. Developing a conceptual framework requires a combination of specific elements from the literature. The conceptualisation is based on providing a developmental focus to the PA, with reference to the obligations of Trustees, set against enabling factors. Table 2.3 identifies the elements selected divided between enabling criteria and functional criteria.

<b>Element</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Source</b>
Enabling Criteria 1	<b>Procedural Justice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency of process</li> <li>• Fairness</li> <li>• Confidentiality</li> </ul>	Piggot-Irvine (2003); Chen et al (2011), Thurston and McNall (2010)
Enabling Criteria 2	<b>Clarity of objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focussed goal setting</li> <li>• Clarity of job role</li> <li>• Development needs</li> </ul>	Piggot-Irvine (2003); Boseline, (2010); Bell (1994); Bevan & Thompson (1992, cited in Bach, 2005)
Enabling Criteria 3	<b>Objective / Informative Data</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed collation process</li> <li>• Multi-rater approach</li> </ul>	Piggot-Irvine (2003); Heathfield (2007)
Enabling Criteria 4	<b>Feedback Culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous feedback &amp; support</li> </ul>	Bell (1994); Heathfield (2007); Kuvaas (2011)
Functional Criteria 1	<b>Performance Review: Motivation and Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>• Personal development</li> <li>• Strengthen working relationships</li> <li>• Assess training needs</li> </ul>	Hannay (2010); Bell (1994)
Functional Criteria 2	<b>Performance Review: Trustee Competencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic direction</li> <li>• Business judgement</li> <li>• Governance</li> <li>• Relationships</li> </ul>	Pointon (2010); NCVO / Charity Commission (2010/2008)

Table 2.3, Sources of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework itself (figure 2.9) is intended to demonstrate the interaction between the functional criteria for Sabbatical Officer appraisal, framed by a set of enabling criteria to guide the style of the appraisal.

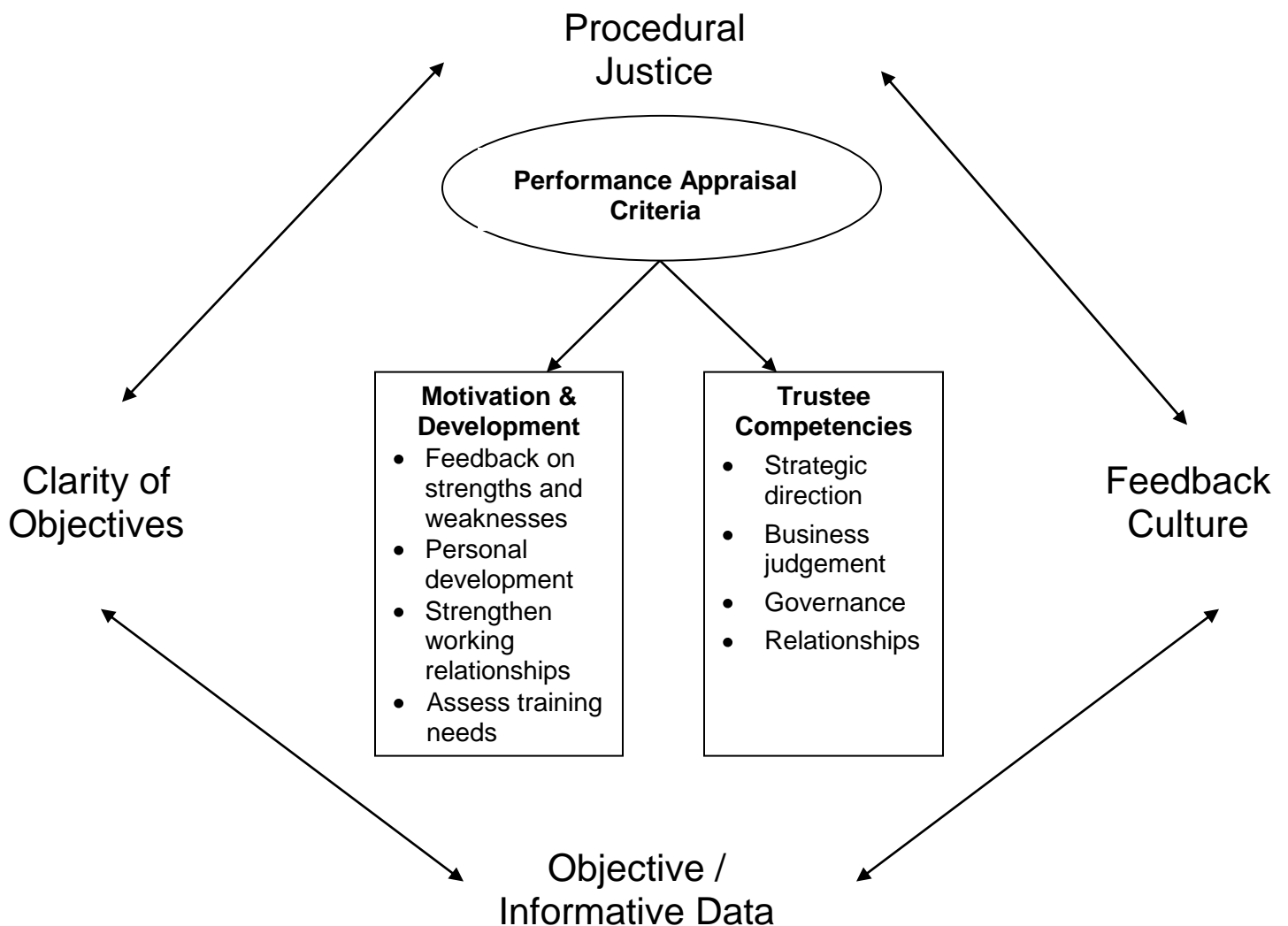


Figure 2.9, Conceptual Framework

The framework enables analysis of the research objectives in a number of ways. The “Motivation and Development” aspect proposes elements of the Sabbatical role that could be appraised outside of the democratic processes, taking into account a focus on

the developmental dimension of PA. Additionally, the “Trustee Competence” dimension allows a critical evaluation of whether these elements constrain performance management for the Sabbatical Officers or whether they add value to the role. Finally, the research phase will test the suitability of the functional criteria, together with whether the enablers deliver an appropriate form of appraisal.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This chapter will focus on outlining the research philosophy to be followed, and the research methods to be employed in order to answer the research objectives successfully.

### **3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

Easterby-Smith et al (2008) identify that understanding the philosophical dimension of management research can aid the researcher in clarifying their research design, recognising which designs will or will not work, and may enable the creation of research designs beyond the researcher's immediate experience. Saunders et al (2007), note that the philosophy the researcher adopts will contain certain assumptions about how that individual views the world which will ultimately underpin the methods chosen to enact the research itself. The chosen philosophy will be subject to the researcher's own view of the relationship between knowledge itself and the process undertaken to create it (Saunders et al, 2007). The literature identifies three key aspects of thinking about research philosophy: ontology, epistemology and axiology.

Ontology concerns a set of assumptions about the nature of reality, ranging from whether it is naturally occurring, or whether reality is a construct of social interaction between individuals (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008). Epistemology concerns the way in which enquiries can be made of the world, and whether the same approach should be used for the natural world as the social world (Saunders et al, 2007). Axiology concerns the role the researcher's values play in the research process. Researchers demonstrate axiological skill by articulating their own values as a basis for making judgments on the research they conduct, whilst accepting that their choice of research philosophy and



design are a representation of their own values (Saunders et al, 2007). Morgan and Smirnich (1980, cited in Collis and Hussey, 2003) represent the ontological assumptions as a continuum upon which it is possible to overlay the three main philosophical social science research philosophies of positivism, realism and social constructionism (figure 3.1).

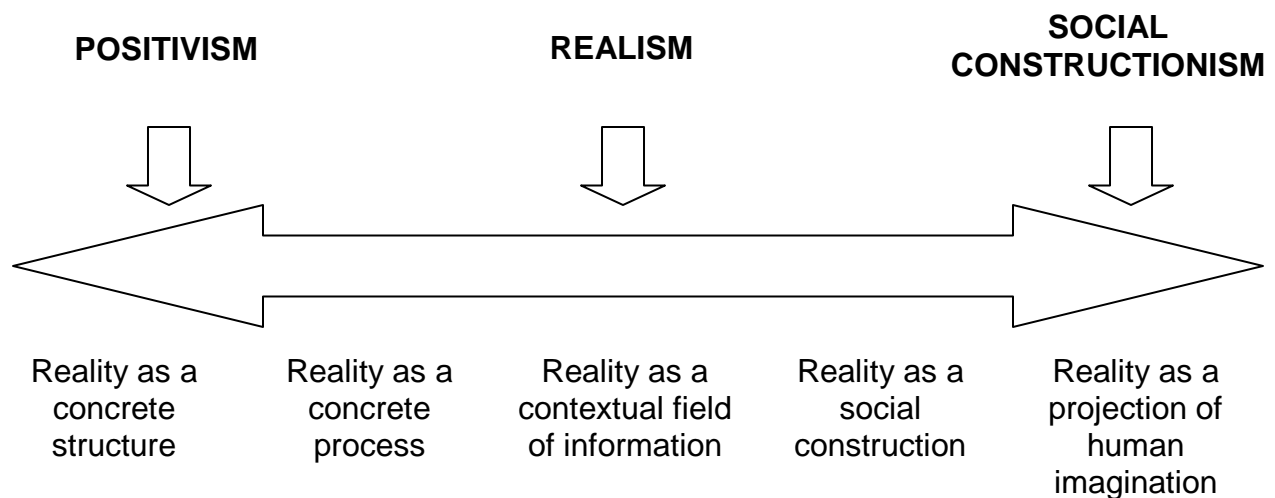


Figure 3.1, Ontological continuum, adapted from Collis and Hussey (2003)

### 3.1.1 Positivism

The positivist approach to research is based on the premise that the truth exists independent of the researcher who seeks to understand it, and that it can be verified by the collection of data that will demonstrate unarguable facts (Jankowicz, 2005). Positivism seeks to establish the facts of the causes of social phenomena with no regard to subjectivity of the environment, or the influence of the researcher on that environment – reality will exist regardless of how or when it is investigated (Collis and Hussey, 2003). A positivistic approach will seek to establish meaningful data through

observable phenomena, preferably through a set of experimental exercises that can be verified and retested by other researchers (Saunders et al, 2007). The key purpose of this approach is to centre on the data not on opinions, and to attempt to draw conclusions from the specific context under review that can then be extrapolated to a wider environment or other organisations (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008). Whilst this approach has its merits, it relies on absolutes of data and detachment of the researcher. Saunders et al (2007) argue that complete detachment is all but impossible though the positivistic approach can be used even if the philosophy is rejected.

### **3.1.2 Social Constructionism**

Criticism of the positivist approach comes from the view that the world is too complex to be reduced to a series of generalised laws and theories (Saunders et al, 2007). Consequently, the social constructionism approach argues that the researcher interacts with the world around them, making sense of it through interpreting the actions of those under observation. The researcher thus has to adopt an empathetic approach to their work and understand the social world of their research subjects from their point of view (Saunders et al, 2007). Social constructionism therefore avoids establishing truths, but instead seeks to generate a socially agreed reality that is open to revision by others. The approach is thus based on generating an understanding rather than a truth, but still requires a rigorous research approach to ensure that these understandings are complete in themselves so as to enable the production of workable predictions (Jankowicz, 2005). In a management research context, social constructionism is appropriate in recognising the situational nature of workplaces in a way that positivism

does not (Saunders et al, 2007), consequently what matters is the meaning of phenomena uncovered rather than their measurement (Collis and Hussey, 2003).

### **3.1.3 Realism**

Whilst positivism and social constructionism represent extremes of research philosophies, realism offers a mid-point on the ontological continuum. Realism shares some of the positivist position, believing that there is an external reality which exists separate to human description, which can be subject to data collection and experimentation (Bryman and Bell, 2007), and assumes a scientific approach to developing knowledge (Saunders et al, 2007). Realism exists in a number of forms (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008), the common schools of thought being direct and critical realism (Saunders et al, 2007). Direct realism argues that what one experiences through the senses is an accurate portrayal of the world (Saunders et al, 2007) and that application of appropriate research methods will confirm that experience (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The direct realist would contend that the world is relatively unchanging and, similar to positivism, would debate whether the actions of a researcher could lead to a change in that world or a change of understanding (Saunders et al, 2007). By contrast, critical realism argues that knowledge of reality requires an acceptance of a bigger picture than what the senses portray. A researcher can only understand the social world by understanding the social structures and processes that gave rise to it (Saunders et al, 2007). The critical realism view is often deemed appropriate in a business research context as it contends that the social world is complex and fluid, and that the researcher needs to understand the reasons behind that complexity and fluidity before recommending change (Saunders et al, 2007). Essentially, critical realism takes the

ontological philosophy behind positivism and weaves a social constructionism thread through it, asserting that truth comes from a consensus of differing viewpoints (Easterby-Smith et al, 2007).

### **3.2 PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION**

In establishing a philosophical position for the questions under review in this study, it is worth returning to analyse the key research objectives.

The first research objective seeks to *“investigate the optimum elements required in structuring performance appraisal of Sabbatical Officer roles outside of the democratic process”*. Identifying the elements required to structure an appraisal process would seem to suggest a positivist approach, as these ought to be measurable and replicable over a range of occasions. However, it is possible to argue that the role of a Sabbatical Officer has at least partly developed through social interaction. Sabbatical Officer roles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are arguable different from how they were conceived when first introduced in the 1950s. At that point, Students’ Unions had not been defined in law as charitable, so the trustee dimension was not a consideration. A true legal definition of the role of a Sabbatical Officer was not achieved until the 1994 Education Act, yet the roles are not consistently defined across the sector: there is an institution by institution approach to the duties, responsibilities and requirements of the roles that has developed through human interaction between post holders, students, the Union and the University. A realist approach which seeks to understand the reason behind the existence of the roles and whether they are appropriate for performance appraisal appeared most appropriate.

The second objective seeks “*to critically evaluate how the requirements of the trustee role affect the performance management needs of Sabbatical Officers*”. Whilst “performance management” could be deemed to be a subject for a positivist approach in that it could be defined and measured, a social constructionist approach would arguably be appropriate too as “performance” is subject to human interpretation between rater and ratee. In addition, the literature review has shown the “the trustee role” to be definable and measurable, but it is arguable that the definition comes from a social construct rather than pure experimentation and conclusion. The mix of positivism and social constructionism in this objective suggested the need for a realist philosophy to be adopted.

Figure 3.2 maps the two objectives onto the ontological continuum.

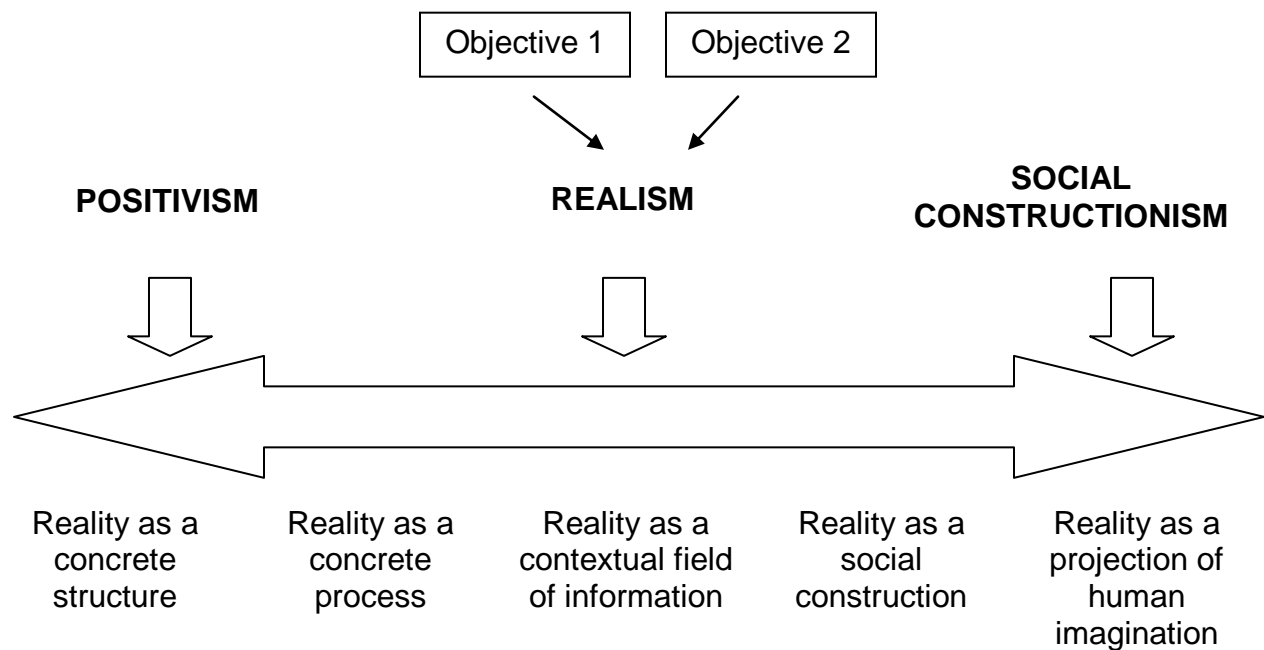


Figure 3.2, Research objectives mapped onto the ontological continuum

As both objectives merited a realist approach, then realism was identified as the underpinning philosophy of this research. Consequently a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods will be considered for the research methodology.

### **3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

Having settled on a realist research philosophy, there were a number of possible research strategies which could have been pursued. These included case studies, longitudinal studies, action research, experimental studies and surveys (Collis and Hussey, 2003). The actual strategy chosen is dependent on the research objectives, setting and philosophy. Given the realist philosophy of this research a case study strategy was utilised as it enabled an in-depth review of one or a small number of organisations, occurrences or people over a time (Easterby-Smith et al, 2007).

Within a case study, context is all important (Collis and Hussey, 2003) as it invariably concerns gathering detailed data about an area of analysis leading to the development of in-depth knowledge. Yin (2003, cited in Saunders et al, 2003:139) reinforces the issue of context being important by noting that in a case study setting,

*“the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and the context within which it is being studied are not clearly evident”*

Some literature points to single case studies suiting social constructionist philosophies (Collis and Hussey, 2003), but its ability to provide answers to question of “why” as well as “what” and “how”, plus the use of multiple and combined data collection techniques (Saunders et al, 2007) make it an appropriate strategy for a realist approach. Eisenhardt

(1989, cited in Easterby-Smith et al, 2007) noted that case studies within a realist epistemology should have clear research designs set from the outset, but be capable of adaptation as the research progresses. In addition, multiple methods of data collection aimed to provide a triangulated set of responses to ensure that the data received is valid and reliable.

Saunders et al (2007) further suggest that case studies are an appropriate research strategy to explore, challenge and test existing theories. As the conceptual framework proposed in chapter two is driven by existing theories about performance appraisal, the case study strategy seemed to provide an appropriate process to test the framework's assumptions.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Having identified a realist philosophy and a case study approach for this research, it was appropriate to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to gather the required data. The combination of methods to provide corroborative evidence for the data or interpretations achieved is known as triangulation (Crowther and Lancaster, 2009). In a realist approach, the intention is that the qualitative methods triangulate the findings of the quantitative research particularly as each method has its own strengths and weaknesses of execution (Saunders et al, 2007). In order to achieve triangulation of results, three methods will be utilised in this study: data line analysis, self completion questionnaires, and semi structured interview.

### **3.4.1 Sample Size**

Although there are around 120 Students' Unions across the United Kingdom Higher Education sector, due to the time constraints of the study, and ease of access to people and data the research and collection of data was limited to the North West and North East regions. The two regions contain twenty four Students' Unions (not including the author's employing organisation) all of whom employ at least three Sabbatical Officers. The author works in the North West region and previously worked in the North East so had access to the Chief Executives of each organisation. The intention was to use a sample of both Chief Executives and a Sabbatical Officer from each Union in order to test the research objectives against the views of both the people who would implement an appraisal process and the people who would receive it. This created a sample frame of forty eight individuals. It was recognised that limiting the research to a compact geographic area would most likely maximise data collection, but risked reducing the overall representativeness of the sample (Saunders et al, 2007). However, the aim of the sample was to reduce bias as it contained a broad mix of types and size of Students' Union. The established business relationship with and geographical proximity to the sample enabled the author to interview and distribute questionnaires to the maximum number of individuals possible, and to employ techniques to attempt a high rate of return.

### **3.4.2 Data Line Analysis**

Douglas (1995) proposed the method of data line analysis as a quick opening method of quantitative research to bring out themes or areas of concern for the subject being



researched. The process involves the researcher producing a list of themes or issues and asking the respondent to rank them in terms of importance. The results of the exercise can then be collated in spreadsheet form enabling the researcher to assess the responses very easily. Douglas (1995) used fifty five statements for ranking, but it is arguable that this could be too many. In addition, some blank spaces can be left for the respondents to submit their own phrases, preventing the researcher only asking closed questions.

Table 3.1 highlights some of the generic advantages and disadvantages of a data line analysis exercise and contrasts those with some contextual observations regarding this research project.

According to the advantages and disadvantages of using data line analysis, the author used this method to test the relative importance of the enabling and functional criteria identified in the conceptual framework. The method was intended to enable an early identification of whether the criteria were sufficient, or whether the framework was missing anything. It was also intended to identify which criteria the respondents believed to be most important: the enablers or the functions.

The research was carried out via an internet based survey using the Survey Monkey software. The Chief Executive and a Sabbatical Officer from each Union in the two regions received an explanatory email followed by a web link to the research. The criteria were listed on a page where the respondent could then rank them in order of importance. The survey was set to list the criteria in a random order each time the page was viewed in order to eliminate any simple bias of ranking them in the order in which

they appeared. The method was piloted with the senior managers and the Sabbatical Officers from the author's employing organisation.

	<b>Generic</b>	<b>Contextual</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	<p>Low cost.</p> <p>Ease and speed of completion.</p> <p>Enables respondent validation.</p> <p>Enables the researcher's view to develop quickly.</p>	<p>Ease of completion for busy people.</p> <p>Quickly identify if conceptual framework is on right track.</p> <p>Can be conducted quickly at a regional meeting of Unions, or via internet research.</p>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<p>How many statements comprise the right number?</p> <p>Respondent may not meaningfully engage with the exercise.</p> <p>Rudimentary method of quantitative research, requires triangulation.</p> <p>Respondents may offer too many of their own choices.</p> <p>If own statements end up ranked, may become statistically insignificant &amp; not register as important.</p> <p>Phrases on cards may possess different significance to researcher and respondent.</p> <p>Unfamiliarity with the method may require time input from researcher to explain the process.</p>	<p>Size of sample may not be sufficient to generate accurate information.</p> <p>Two quantitative exercises may be asking a lot of the respondents, so design and method of request will be important.</p>

Table 3.1 Comparison of generic and contextual strengths and weaknesses of a data line analysis exercise

## **Response Rate**

The DLA was completed by 32 respondents from a sample frame of 48. The respondents were split equally between Sabbatical Officers and senior members of Union staff.

### **3.4.3 Self-Completion Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are regarded as a one of the most widely used data collection techniques given that they are an efficient method of collecting responses from a large sample prior to developing a quantitative analysis (Saunders et al, 2007). For this research, the proposal is to test the objectives by using an internet administered questionnaire, with each participant being sent a link to the survey website. This method is rapidly developing into a common source of data collection (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008).

Table 3.2 highlights some of the generic advantages and disadvantages of a web based self completion questionnaire and contrasts those with some contextual observations regarding this research project.

According to the advantages and disadvantages of using web based self completion questionnaires, the author constructed a self completion questionnaire to test the extent to which respondents believed the democratic process provided effective performance review for Sabbatical Officers; the effectiveness of the elements which combine to form a performance review process *outside* the democratic structures; and the effectiveness of any review of trustee capabilities. In this way, the questionnaire touched on all the

components of the conceptual framework and addressed the two key research objectives, seeking to test both the opinions and behaviours of respondents.

The questionnaire used predominantly closed questions on a Likert scale. A mid-point was not used to avoid respondents exhibiting central bunching tendencies. As a realist philosophy enables the use of open and closed questions (Collis and Hussey, 2003), some open text responses were also included to enable respondents to identify their own opinions on specific criteria. In addition, some list questions and some ranking questions were also utilised.

A web link to the questionnaires was emailed to the Chief Executive and a Sabbatical Officer from each of the Students' Unions in the sample. The email contained some explanatory information about the nature of the survey. The online tool Survey Monkey was used as the tool to collect the data. The web based nature of the questionnaire enabled the maintenance of anonymity and there was an opportunity for the user to validate their responses at the survey's end. The questionnaire was piloted by the senior managers and Sabbatical Officers from the author's employing organisation. This process resulted in some amendments to the original survey draft, particularly focussing on ensuring that the language employed was meaningful for both elected officers and permanent staff members.

### **Response Rate**

The self completion questionnaire was completed by 23 respondents from a sample frame of 48 and completed evenly between Sabbatical Officers and staff members.

	<b>Generic</b>	<b>Contextual</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	<p>Low cost.</p> <p>Appealing design.</p> <p>Filters can be put in place to move users to correct questions subject to previous responses.</p> <p>Automatic download of answers to database for analysis.</p> <p>High probability of the right person answering.</p> <p>Maintains privacy / anonymity of respondent.</p> <p>Low risk of questionnaire contamination or tampering.</p> <p>Consistency of question asking</p> <p>Ease of completion (subject to design).</p>	<p>Sample population has high incidence of internet / IT usage – unlikely to be put off by technology.</p> <p>Ease of completion for busy people.</p> <p>Availability of email contact details ensures right person answers.</p> <p>Anonymity important.</p> <p>Some technical language use possible.</p> <p>Author's employer has subscription access to <a href="http://www.surveymonkey.com">www.surveymonkey.com</a></p>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<p>Can limit sample to internet competent respondents.</p> <p>Evidence of poor response rates, particularly as no interviewer present to administer completion.</p> <p>Risk of missed data when people choose not to answer.</p> <p>Needs to be reasonably short in length to “hook” respondents.</p> <p>Does not support complex questioning.</p> <p>Must be an interest to the respondent to prompt a reply.</p> <p>Variability in understanding the question without prompts from an interviewer</p> <p>No opportunity to probe responses</p> <p>Requires access to an online survey package.</p>	<p>What incentive to complete? – reliant on personal relationship with author rather than employment or financial relationship.</p> <p>Small sample size may affect validity / reliability if response rate is low.</p> <p>Sabbatical Officer respondents may not understand the technical nature of the questioning through lack of experience.</p>

Table 3.2 Comparison of generic and contextual strengths and weaknesses of web based self completion questionnaires

#### **3.4.4 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Interviews can be defined as a process for accumulating data by asking selected participants a series of questions to understand what they do, think or feel about an issue (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Given the realist philosophy of this research, and in order to provide qualitative data to triangulate the quantitative methods outlined above, semi-structured interviews are proposed as a third method. A semi-structured interview takes a list of questions on specific areas related to the research but allows the respondent a degree of latitude in how they respond (Bryman and Bell, 2008). The process is intended to be flexible and may differ from participant to participant, though Crowther and Lancaster (2009) challenge the need for a script or schedule. Using open questions can enable participants to provide their own definition and description of situation or propositions, though this does make comparison of the responses difficult (Saunders et al, 2007).

Table 3.3 highlights some of the generic advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews and contrasts those with some contextual observations regarding this research project.

According to the advantages and disadvantages of using semi-structured interviews, the author undertook two interviews with three Chief Executives from the two regions. The method sought to underpin and corroborate the quantitative data generated by the other two methods, and to focus in on issues raised or not covered by that data. Eleven questions were drafted covering the elements of the conceptual framework, and relating them to the research objectives. The questions were set after the completion of the first

two research methods in order to use the results to guide the interview process. The questions were phrased as openly as possible to enable the respondents to discuss their own views and opinions on the topic at hand. Supplementary questions were not prepared, but were used by the author as and when necessary to probe responses further, or to pursue particular lines of enquiry relative to the information obtained. A pilot interview was conducted with a senior manager from the author's employing organisation who did not then form part of the main sample.

	<b>Generic</b>	<b>Contextual</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	<p>Open questioning allows opportunity to probe points of interest.</p> <p>Enables researcher to test the respondent's understanding of concepts and issues.</p> <p>Flexibility of process enables question order to be varied to match the flow of conversation.</p> <p>Can be audio-recorded with participant's permission.</p> <p>Questions can be targeted specifically to the research objectives.</p> <p>Data likely to be of good quality and recent.</p> <p>Non verbal cues can be used to identify secondary questioning opportunities.</p>	<p>Shared understanding of subject matter between researcher and respondents should allow for rich conversation.</p> <p>Familiarity of researcher and respondents should enable an open process to be established.</p>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<p>Costly in terms of time and geographical travel.</p> <p>Lack of anonymity for respondents.</p> <p>Variability in responses can make data recording difficult.</p> <p>Requires good interviewing skills, and consistency of approach from one interview to another.</p> <p>Need to be aware of interviewer and respondent bias,</p> <p>Recording the data and maintaining the interview process may not be compatible skills in the interviewer.</p> <p>Prior events may influence responses</p>	<p>Familiarity between researcher and respondents risks bias in responses.</p>

Table 3.3 Comparison of generic and contextual strengths and weaknesses semi-structured interviews



### **3.5 TRIANGULATION, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Triangulation requires the results of one research method to be corroborated against results achieved employing another method (Bryman and Bell, 2007) and enables a greater degree of accuracy and insight to be achieved than when a single method has been applied (Crowther and Lancaster, 2009). Table 3.4 compares the key strengths and weaknesses of the three research methods chosen in order to demonstrate the achievement of triangulation in this study.

<b>Data Line Analysis</b>	Low cost +	Anonymity preserved +	Easy data recording +	High quality recent data +	Rudimentary method –	Face to face contact possible +	Option for open responses provides some flexibility +	Participant validation possible  +
<b>Web-based Self Completion Questionnaires</b>	Low cost +	Anonymity preserved +	Easy data recording +	High quality recent data +	Robust method +	No face to face contact –	May not offer opportunity for open responses or open responses of low value –	Participant validation not always possible  –
<b>Semi Structured Interviews</b>	Costly in terms of time and geographical travel. –	Lack of anonymity –	Data recording can be complex –	High quality recent data +	Robust, in depth method +	Face to face contact possible +	Completely open responses allow for development of data +	Participant validation possible  +
<b>Triangulation achieved?</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>

Table 3.4, Comparison of research methods employed to demonstrate triangulation

### **3.6 CROSS MAPPING MATRIX**

The cross mapping matrix (Table 3.5) was designed to ensure triangulation of the research methods across each element of the conceptual method and across both the research objectives. Each element of the conceptual framework is represented by a section of the cross mapping matrix for each objective being researched.

	To investigate the optimum elements required in structuring performance appraisal of Sabbatical Officer roles outside of the democratic process			To critically evaluate how the requirements of the trustee role affect the performance management needs of Sabbatical Officers		
	DLA	SCQ	SSI	DLA	SCQ	SSI
<b>Procedural Justice</b>	Statements a, b, c	Q3a & b Q7a & b Q11a & b	Q1a	Statements a, b, c	N/A	Q1b
<b>Clarity of Objectives</b>	Statements d, e, f	Q3c & d Q5a, b, & c Q7c & d Q9a, b & c Q11c & d	Q2a	Statements d, e, f	N/A	Q2b
<b>Objective Data</b>	Statements h, i	Q3f & g Q5g, Q7 f&g Q9g, Q11f & g	Q3a	Statements h, i	N/A	Q3b
<b>Feedback Culture</b>	Statements g, j	Q3e, Q 5f, h,& i Q7e, Q9h & i Q11e	Q4a	Statements g, j	N/A	Q4b
<b>Motivation &amp; Development</b>	Statements k, l, m, n	Q3h, i, j and k Q5d & e Q7h, i, j and k Q9d & e Q11h, i, j & k	Q5	Statements k, l, m, n	N/A	N/A
<b>Trustee Competencies</b>	Statements o, p, q, r	Q15 & 16	N/A	Statements o, p, q, r	Q 14, 15, 16	Q6a and b

Table 3.5, Cross mapping matrix

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

This chapter presents the findings from the research methods chosen in chapter three. The findings are structured and presented by the elements of the conceptual framework and then by the methods employed.

## 4.1 PROCEDURAL JUSTICE

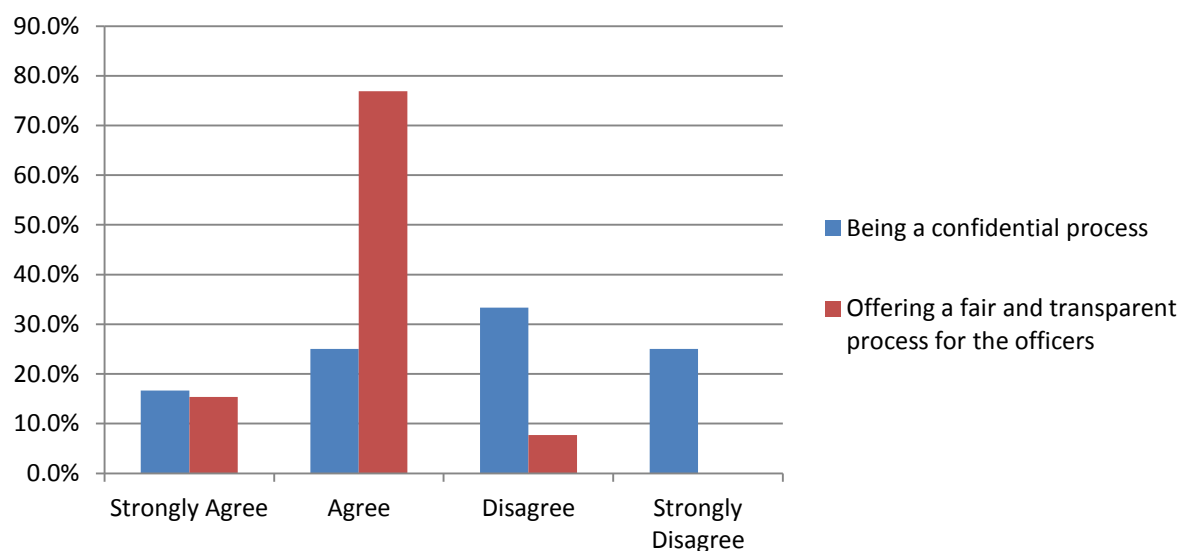
### 4.1.1 Data Line Analysis results

Statement	Overall Rank / 18	Officer Rank / 18	Staff Rank / 18
Transparency of the process	15	17	14
Fairness of the process	13	16	11
Confidentiality of the process	10	13=	5

### 4.1.2 Self Completion Questionnaire Results

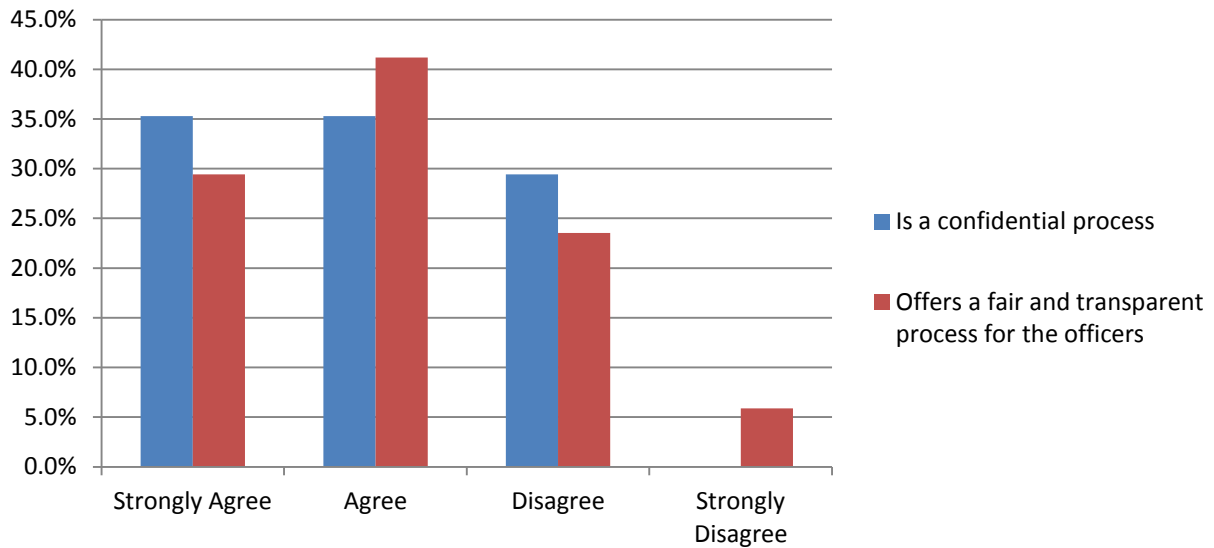
#### Question 3a and 3b

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The democratic processes in our Union effectively review Sabbatical Officer performance by (a) being a confidential process and (b) offering a fair and transparent process for the officers?*



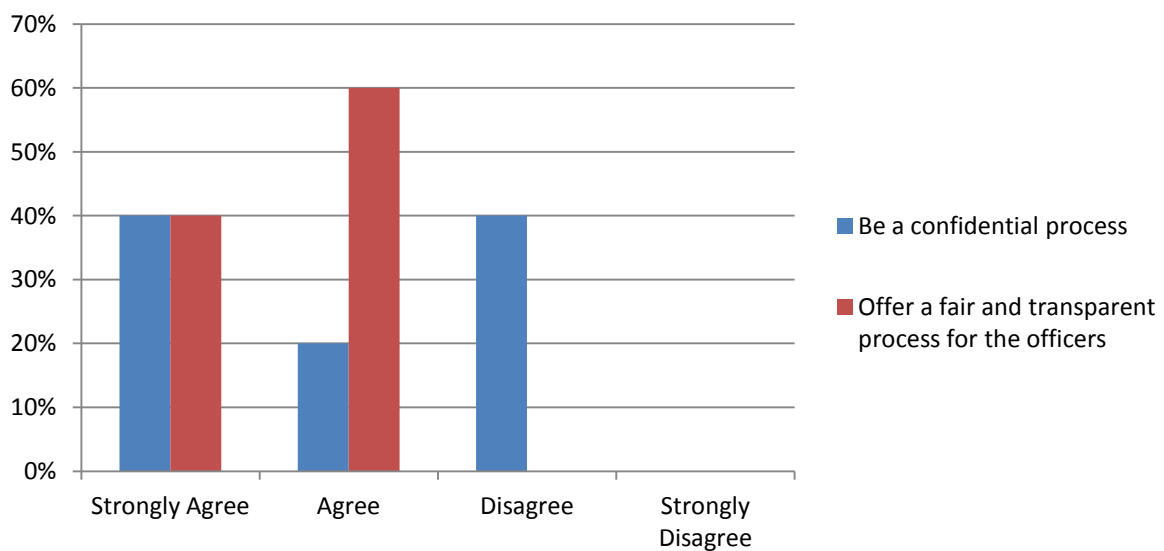
### Question 7a, and 7b

To what extent do you agree with the following statements: *The performance review process for Sabbatical Officers in our Union is effective because it (a) is a confidential process and (b) offers a fair and transparent process for the officers?*



### Question 11a and 11b

To what extent do you agree with the following statements: *If an officer review process were to be introduced into our Union, it should (a) be a confidential process and (b) offer a fair and transparent process for the officers?*





#### **4.1.3 Semi Structured Interview Results**

*Q1a: How does your Union ensure that the process of reviewing the officers' performance is fair and transparent?*

The interviewees expressed differences of opinion over the issue of fairness and transparency. Two respondents indicated that they felt that fairness and transparency were not built into their review processes, largely due to their Unions not operating formal feedback processes and therefore opening those processes that do exist to the risk of bias. One reported that feedback was given on an issue by issue basis and as a result was not necessarily structured, thus creating the possibility of it being unfairly executed. In their view the feedback process was purely formative, focussed on the issues and outcomes of a project rather than an individual's performance. The other respondent's process consisted of a series of regular conversations between key staff and the officers, and that this also focussed on corrective action if a project had not gone well, or action planning what to do next. However, this respondent also provided a 360 feedback process for the officers at a midway point in the year.

A third respondent suggested that they aimed to achieve fairness and transparency by explaining to officers at the start of the year how the review process would be structured so that they know what is coming. In this instance the review consisted of two 360 feedback sessions based on a set of known criteria, and that the feedback given is aimed at developing the individual's skills across the term of office.

*Q1b. How does your Union offer a fair and transparent process for reviewing the officers' performance as trustees?*

In response to this question, the interviewees again varied in approach. The two who provided officer 360 reviews built a review of the trustee role into that process. One respondent indicated that their process suggested that officers saw the trustee dimension as a “necessary evil” and were not over keen on having to exercise it compared to the wider role of being an elected representative. The other respondent who measured reviewed trustee performance through their 360 review also facilitated the Board of Trustees in undertaking an annual performance review against the NCVO self evaluation measures of a “good” Board. This respondent felt that the “whole Board” approach was more important than individual trustee review and therefore tended to be fair and transparent.

The third respondent’s Union reviewed trustee performance in a summative style at the last Board meeting of the officer year in July, again using standards from the NCVO self evaluation process. This process consisted of individual trustees providing feedback on the Board’s collective performance, without singling out individuals and thus providing a fair environment for review:

*“Opportunities to review tend to be about the Board’s procedures rather than individual trustee performance”*

The outcomes of the review are recorded and then built into the training events for the next set of Trustees.

#### **4.1.4 Commentary**

Compared to other components of the conceptual framework, the DLA exercise saw respondents rank the procedural justice elements in the lower half of the exercise, indicating that they were seen as important but not essential. There was a

divergence of responses between officers and senior managers, with managers ranking “confidentiality” fifth out of eighteen choices.

The SCQ responses indicated that existing review processes provided procedural justice for the reviewees. 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their democratic processes were effective when reviewing officer performance by being procedurally just; 70% agreed or strongly agreed that other forms of review were effective in this way; and 100% agreed or strongly agreed that if a review were to be introduced to their Union it should be a fair and transparent process. There was less agreement about confidentiality: 68% disagreed or strongly disagreed that democratic processes offered a confidential review which questions its effectiveness, though 70% agreed or strongly agreed that other forms of review were confidential. If a review were to be introduced, only 60% agreed or strongly agreed it should be confidential.

The SSIs corroborated these findings as there appeared to be a general consensus that the formative, conversational nature of their review processes meant that they could be judged as being unfair or not transparent. Though the fact that one respondent outlined the process at the start of the year would indicate that they took transparency seriously.

The literature is quite clear about the importance of procedural justice being at the heart of a review process (Chen et al, 2011; Thurston and McNall 2010 Kuvaas, 2007; Piggot-Irvine, 2003). However, the results from this investigation appear inconclusive. There appears to be an expectation that procedural justice exists in reviews outside of the democratic process, but the view is cloudier over whether the democratic process itself exhibits procedural justice. The SSIs, coming from a staff

point of view, offer a more realistic judgement: every intention exists to make the process fair and transparent, but the often informal nature of reviewing officer performance probably undermines this. The DLA findings indicate that comparatively, procedural justice is not as important to a review process as other elements.

Despite the ambivalence towards procedural justice displayed by the findings, the whole review process, within and without the democratic structure, and from a trustee perspective, risks being rejected by the appraisees if they cannot discern a fair approach (Thurston and McNall, 2010). Potentially, the ambivalence towards procedural justice comes from an expectation that any process will be fair anyway. However Kuvaas (2007) demonstrated that some individuals with high degrees of autonomy in their work reject developmental PA processes as they perceive it means managers are exhibiting a lack of trust in their work. Sabbatical officers generally have high autonomy in their working lives, so may be judging any attempt to review their performance through this prism.

## 4.2 CLARITY OF OBJECTIVES

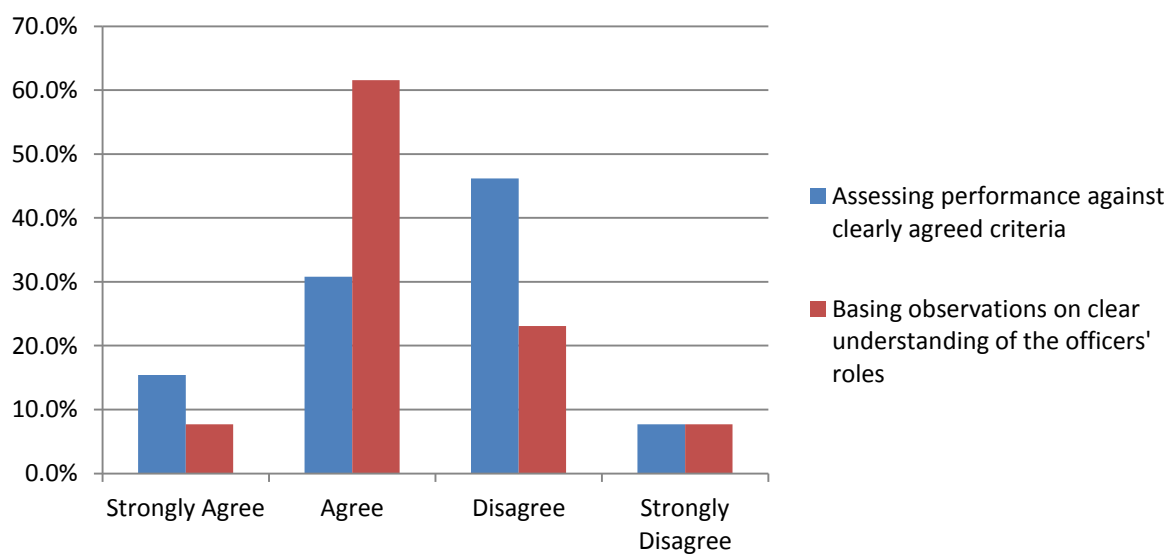
### 4.2.1 Data Line Analysis results

Statement	Overall Rank / 18	Officer Rank / 18	Staff Rank / 18
Focussed objectives set at the start of the process	3	8=	2
Clarity of job role confirmed at the start of the process	2	1	3
Identification of development needs at the start of the process	5	7	7

### 4.2.2 Self Completion Questionnaire Results

#### Question 3c and 3d

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The democratic processes in our Union effectively review Sabbatical Officer performance by (c) assessing performance against clearly agreed criteria and (d) basing observations on clear understanding of officer roles?*



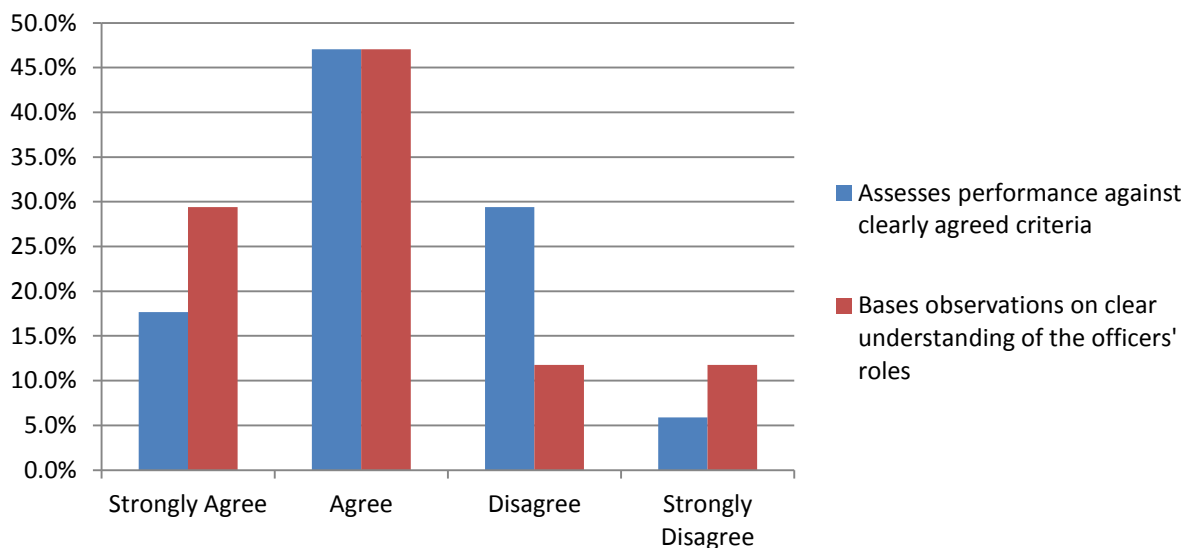
### Question 5a, 5b and 5c

Which of the following features are present in the performance review process for Sabbatical Officers in your Union? (select all that apply)

Answer Options	Present in our process
Objective / goal setting at the start of the officer year	88.2%
Creation of an individual officer action plan	64.7%
Creation of an officer team action plan	23.5%

### Question 7c and 7d

To what extent do you agree with the following statements: *The performance review process for Sabbatical Officers in our Union is effective because it (c) assesses performance against clearly agreed criteria and (d) bases observations on clear understanding of the officers' roles?*



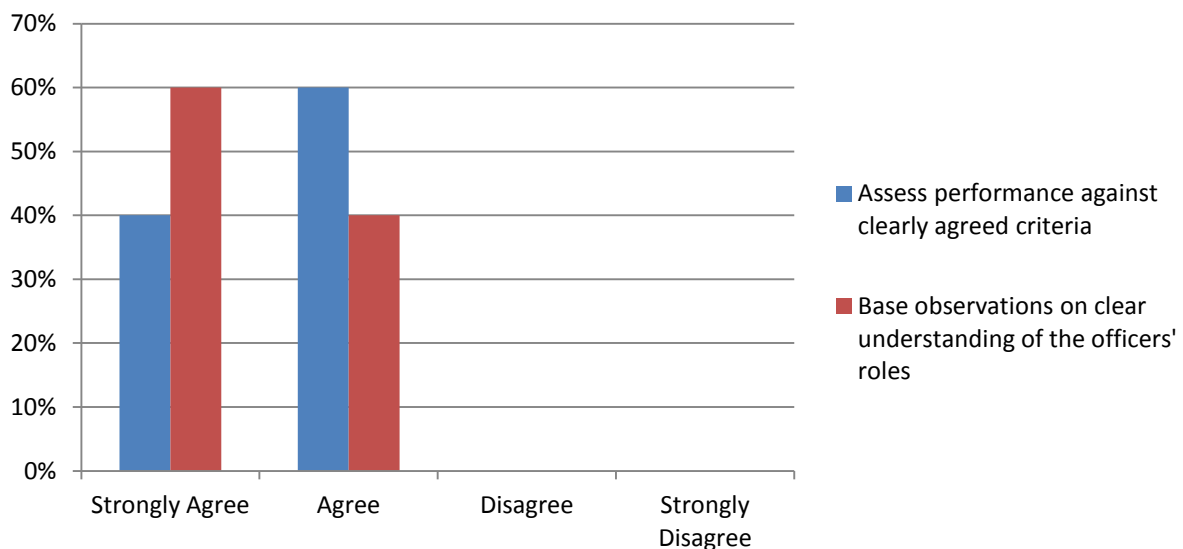
### Question 9a, 9b and 9c

If an officer review process were to be introduced to your Union, which of the following elements would you expect to see included? (select all that apply)

Answer Options	Ought to be included
Objective / goal setting at the start of the officer year	100%
Creation of an individual officer action plan	80%
Creation of an officer team action plan	60%

### Question 11c and 11d

To what extent do you agree with the following statements: *If an officer review process were to be introduced into our Union, it should (c) assess performance against clearly agreed criteria and (d) base observations on clear understanding of the officers' roles?*



### 4.2.3 Semi Structured Interview Results

*Q2a: How does your Union ensure that it provides clear, focussed objectives for Sabbatical Officers at the start of their term in office?*

Practices varied across the respondents, though all of them took a lead from pledges made by the officers in their election campaigns. One Union did not provide any kind of facilitated process for turning manifesto pledges into action points, but did work with the individuals to help them identify five to six big issues they wished to achieve by the year end. These issues were then developed through a SMART planning process with the assistance of Union staff members who can then plan how to support the officers' delivery of those objectives.

The second Union also started to help officers form objectives during the training and induction process at the start of their term of office, and facilitated the creation of a plan of activities the officers wished to achieve. The respondent's view was that the outputs of this process were potentially an area of organisational weakness, as the officer plan often ended up not as neatly tied in to the overall Union strategic plan as other departmental plans. The respondent was of the opinion that this was perhaps a "natural condition of Students' Unions" given the annual turnover in elected officers.

The third respondent took a view that the provision of clear focussed objectives started with clear statements of role descriptions for the officers coupled with the constitutional duties of elected officers and trustees. The view was that those statements were "generic enough for anyone's aspirations for the role to apply" and set a framework from which objective setting could begin. The officers were then supported in creating a team work plan outlining their objectives for the year, but that this had to be signed off by the Trustee Board before funds could be allocated to support its execution. Sign off was more often than not secured through the work plan demonstrating its alignment with the wider Union strategic plan.

*Q2b: How does your Union ensure that it provides clear, focussed objectives for Sabbatical Officers in executing their role as trustees?*

In each instance, respondents noted that the prevailing legal framework for the role of a trustee, usually embedded in the organisation's constitution, provided clarity for the officers in their trustee role. This was reaffirmed through induction training clearly setting out the role of the Board and expectations of trustees. It was also suggested that a Board should set its own collective objectives in terms of what it wanted to see



achieved by the organisation. More often than not, this ended up driving a wider strategic planning and objective setting process.

One respondent indicated that their officers were expected to report to the Board on the progress of their wider objectives through submission of “accountability reports” that also get submitted to the democratic committee process. However,

*“In practice, the Board doesn’t exercise any performance management though the accountability reports probably get more scrutiny than they do through the democratic structure, though this is done in a very supportive rather than critical way.”*

#### **4.2.4 Commentary**

All the research methods demonstrated strong support for the importance of providing officers with clear, unambiguous objectives for the year. The DLA ranked the three elements related to clarity of objectives within the top five of the whole process, with officers themselves singling out “clarity of job role at the beginning of the process” as the most important factor of all.

The SCQ results demonstrated some divergence over the impact and the importance of this element. Only 45% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the democratic process effectively judged officer performance against clearly agreed criteria. This possibly indicates that despite answers to the procedural justice questions, the process may not be as fair and transparent as suggested. Perhaps the lesson to be learnt comes from the Union in the SSIs which encouraged officers to submit accountability reports through the democratic structures, which could be viewed as the officers themselves framing the clear criteria against which they are

prepared to be measured, thus attempting to build in a degree of effectiveness that might otherwise be missing.

When other forms of review were considered, 88% said goal setting took place and 66% said an officer action plan was created. 65% agreed or strongly agreed that clearly agreed objectives made that process effective, and 77% agreed or strongly agreed that effectiveness of the process came from a thorough understanding of the officers' roles. The SCQ also identified that in Unions where no review process existed, 100% believed goal setting should be part of an introduced process, 80% felt action planning should take place and 100% felt individual development needs should be identified at the start.

From the SSIs, it transpired that goal setting was prevalent in all the cases, but took different forms subject to organisational context. These then provided the framework on which to build review processes. The SSIs also indicated that to a certain extent, objectives were also set for the trustee role but generally under the auspices of the legal requirements of the role. The standards set out by the NCVO (2010) and the Charity Commission (2008) clearly lend themselves to being categorised in this way and used as a basis for constructing objectives against which performance is reviewable.

Both evaluative and developmental styles of appraisal regard goal setting as a key element in the PA/PM process (Boselie, 2010; Millmore et al , 2007; Armstrong, 2001; Bell 1994), though it features more strongly in the evaluative school as developmental PA focuses more on the ways in which people work rather than their outputs (Chen et al, 2011). The strong support in the research for clarity of objectives in creating an effective review process indicates a degree of comfort existing around

the notion, suggesting that it provides direction and focus for individuals undertaking a one year role even where, as political leaders and trustees, they are not naturally in a position to be evaluated by the organisation.

## 4.3 OBJECTIVE DATA

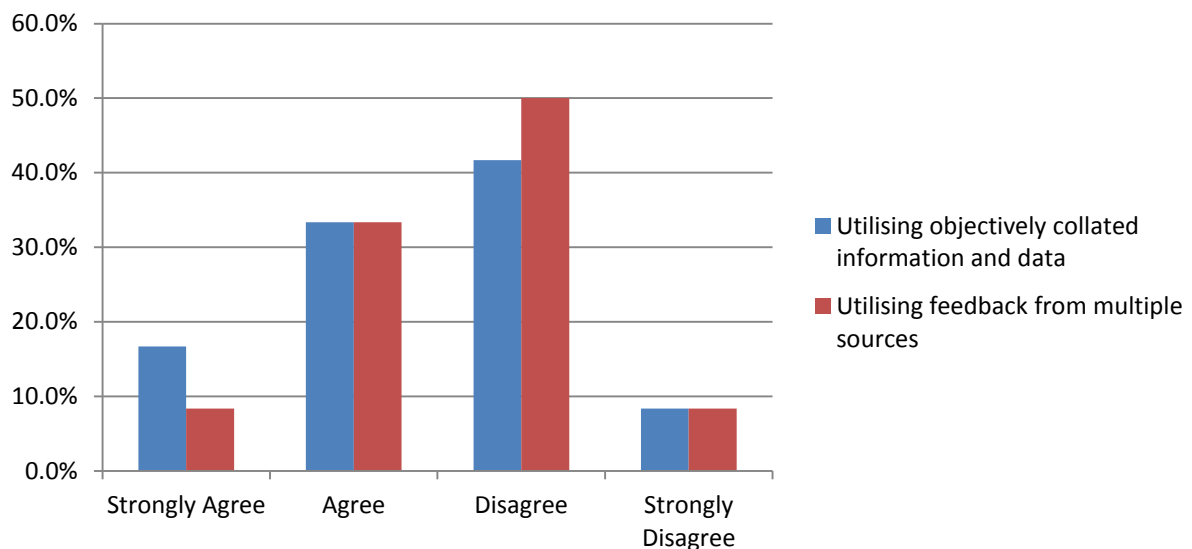
### 4.3.1 Data Line Analysis results

Statement	Overall Rank / 18	Officer Rank / 18	Staff Rank / 18
A jointly agreed process for collecting information about performance	14	12	15
Feedback collated from multiple work contacts	4	5	6

### 4.3.2 Self Completion Questionnaire Results

#### Question 3f and 3g

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The democratic processes in our Union effectively review Sabbatical Officer performance by (f) utilising objectively collated information and data and (g) utilising feedback from multiple sources?*



### Question 5g

Which of the following features are present in the performance review process for Sabbatical Officers in your Union? (select all that apply)

#### Answer Options

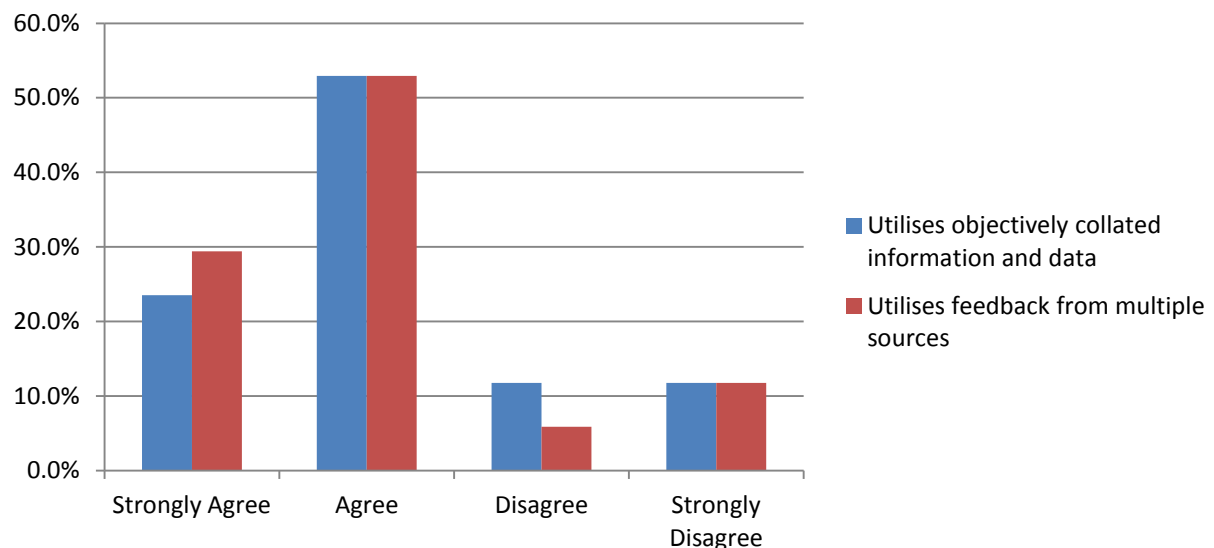
#### Present in our process

Formal gathering of feedback from multiple sources / individuals

58.8%

### Question 7f and 7g

To what extent do you agree with the following statements: *The performance review process for Sabbatical Officers in our Union is effective because it (f) utilises objectively collated information and data and (g) utilises feedback from multiple sources?*



### Question 9g

If an officer review process were to be introduced to your Union, which of the following elements would you expect to see included? (select all that apply)

#### Answer Options

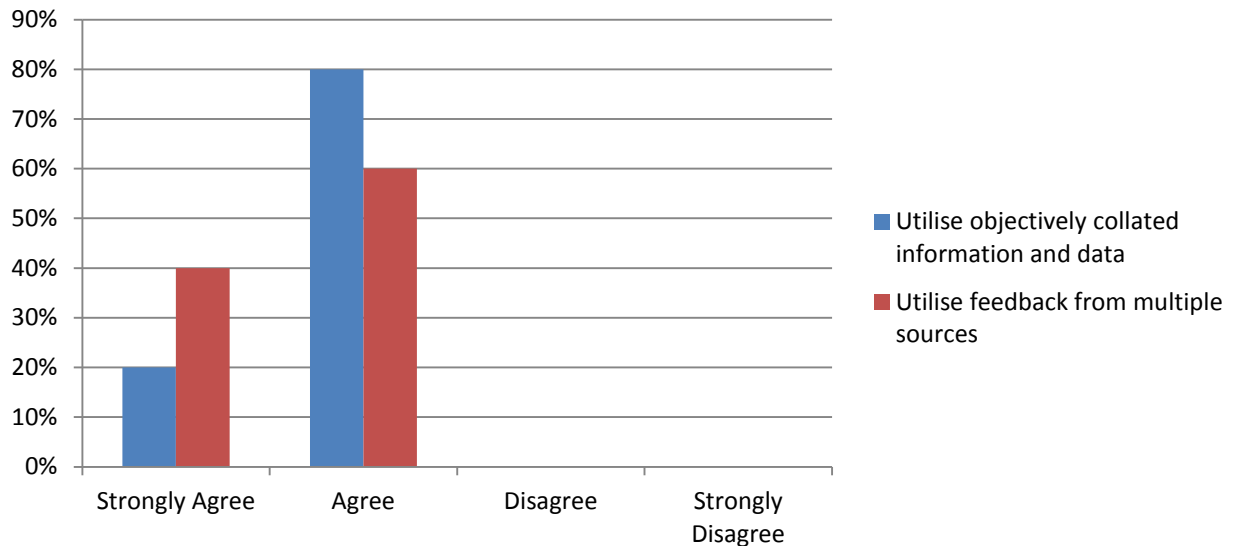
#### Ought to be included

Formal gathering of feedback from multiple sources / individuals

60%

### Question 11f and 11g

To what extent do you agree with the following statements: *If an officer review process were to be introduced into our Union, it should (f) utilise objectively collated information and data and (g) utilise feedback from multiples sources?*



#### 4.3.3 Semi Structured Interview Results

*Q3a: How does your Union ensure that when reviewing officer performance, it objectively collates information and data? What sources does this come from?*

The two respondents with 360 feedback processes cited those exercises as providing objectively collated information and data. One of those Unions used a 1 to 5 scoring scale against a number of criteria but was clear to state that the process was about “offering opinions that the officer can take or leave”. The measurement process is agreed with the officers before it begins, but the view was that “at the end of the day, officers just view it as a set of opinions”.

The other Union using a 360 process added to that through the development of data collation across the organisation. The respondent noted that the Union as whole was now seeking to collect measures of its performance and impact across its activities,

so the officers now look for numbers that measure their own representative performance, and provide “evidence of the Union achieving (or not) its targets and therefore the officers’ contribution to that”.

The third respondent’s Union felt that it was difficult to describe their process as objectively collating data. Most feedback came through one-to-one or group review sessions, characterised by the view that,

*“An absence of a formal structure makes it difficult to say that any of it is objective”*

However, there was a view that discussion at the Union Management Group (made up of officers and senior managers) attempted to objectively discuss the outcomes of projects commissioned through the officer work plan. However the respondent was clear to stress that this process did not focus on the personal development of the officers with discussion being

*“all issue based, focussed on the product not the producer, and on outcomes not inputs”*

*Q3b: In reviewing officer performance as trustees, how does your Union ensure that it objectively collates information and data?*

Both the Unions providing the 360 reviews said that they made no attempt to objectively collate data on trustee performance, other than through the 360 exercise itself. The third Union felt that its annual board performance review that used a self assessment process by the trustees gave some objectivity.

*“The clear legal guidelines of the trustee role help objectivity when reviewing performance, especially when compared to the wider officer role”*

However, the respondent felt that in reality, the process was as likely to be subjective as it was objective dependent on how each individual trustee approached the exercise.

#### **4.3.4 Commentary**

The DLA indicated that whilst there was support for the notion of a multi-rater approach to collating data, this was not backed up by a need to agree the process jointly, perhaps suggesting that the multi-rater approach is seen as an expectation of the process.

The SCQ suggests that within the democratic processes opinion is split as to whether performance review is effective due to utilising objectively collated data from multiple sources, with almost an even split between those who agreed with the statements and those who disagreed. For Unions who provided reviews outside of the democratic process, only 58% of respondents said that process utilised multiple sources of feedback. However, where it was present 83% agreed or strongly agreed that multiple sources of feedback made the process effective. Where no review process existed, the results showed that all respondents felt that objectively collated data gained from multiple sources ought to be utilised if a review process were to be introduced.

The information gathered from the SSIs reiterated this perception given the use of 360-feedback models in two of the cases. Both those 360 models also reviewed the officers' performance in the trustee role, going some way to attempting to collect



objective data in that regard. The research is clearly supportive of the literature which noted the increasing use of 360 / multi-rater approaches for collating data on individual performance (Heathfield, 2007; Schraeder, 2007). However, it is worth reiterating the criticism of the multi-rater approach in that it can be perceived a tool for manipulation and control if introduced and operated without mutual agreement and understanding or appropriate training (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2008; Kuvaas, 2007; Bach, 2005). Clearly in the case of elected Sabbatical Officers, despite the indication in the DLA that there is little emphasis placed on the process needing to be jointly agreed, it would be contextually inappropriate to implement such a system of feedback without their consent and understanding as to why it is there.

## 4.4 FEEDBACK CULTURE

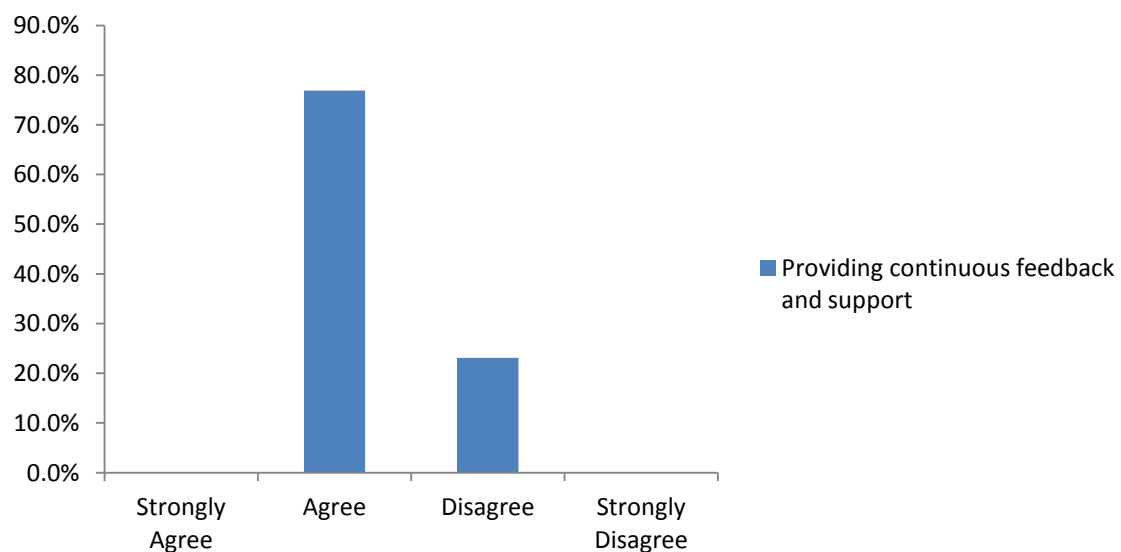
### 4.4.1 Data Line Analysis results

Statement	Overall Rank / 18	Officer Rank / 18	Staff Rank / 18
A culture of continuous feedback and support throughout the process	1	2	1
An annual performance review meeting	17	13=	17

### 4.4.2 Self Completion Questionnaire Results

#### Question 3e

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The democratic processes in our Union effectively review Sabbatical Officer performance by (e) providing continuous feedback and support?*



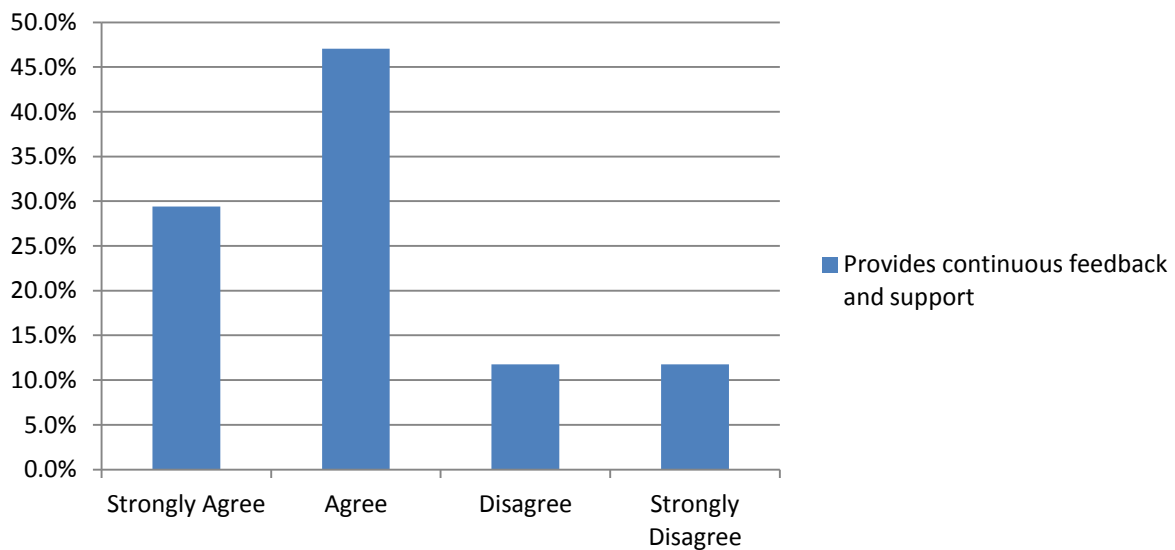
### Question 5f, 5h and 5i

Which of the following features are present in the performance review process for Sabbatical Officers in your Union? (select all that apply)

Answer Options	Present in our process
Regular 1-2-1 meetings between an officer and the senior staff member throughout the year	76.5%
Formal review meeting between an officer and the senior staff member to discuss feedback	64.7%
Exit interview at the end of the officer year	35.3%

### Question 7e

To what extent do you agree with the following statements: *The performance review process for Sabbatical Officers in our Union is effective because it (e) provides continuous feedback and support?*



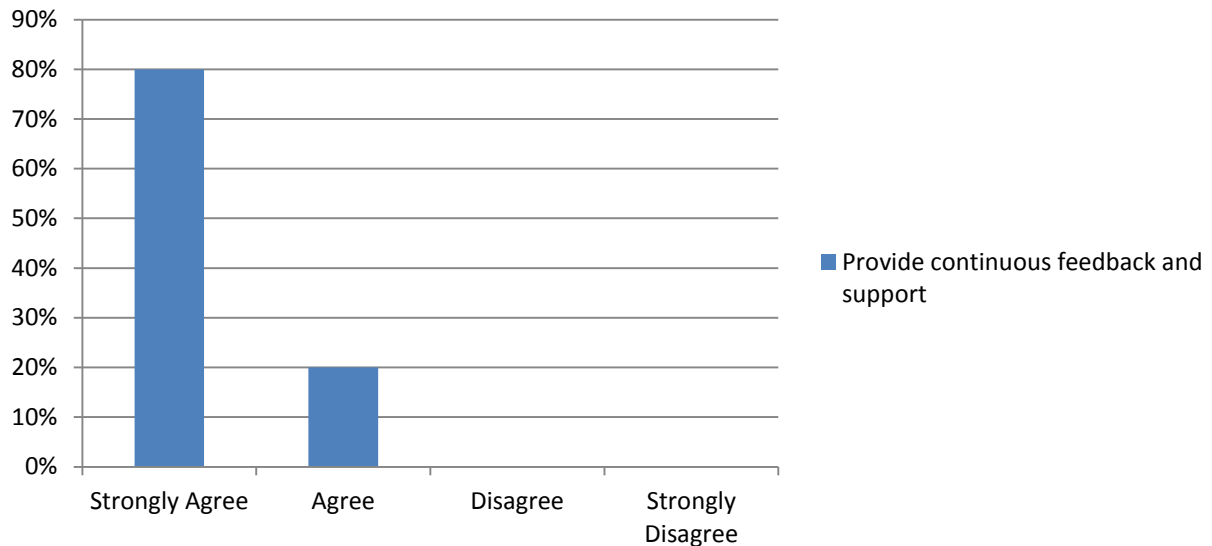
### Question 9f, 9h and 9i

If an officer review process were to be introduced to your Union, which of the following elements would you expect to see included? (select all that apply)

Answer Options	Ought to be included
Regular 1-2-1 meetings between an officer and the senior staff member throughout the year	80%
Formal review meeting between an officer and the senior staff member to discuss feedback	40%
Exit interview at the end of the officer year	60%

#### Question 11e

To what extent do you agree with the following statements: *If an officer review process were to be introduced into our Union, it should (e) provide continuous feedback and support?*



#### 4.4.3 Semi Structured Interview Results

*Q4a: How does your Union create a culture where officers can receive regular feedback and support about their performance? What typifies this culture?*

Each respondent indicated similar traits in how their Union created a culture of regular feedback and support. All reported that regular contact between senior managers and officers created an environment for feedback to be delivered. This was usually provided through officers being linked with either a nominated senior staff member or through regular one-to-one meetings with the Chief Executive. The frequency of these sessions varied with one respondent reporting meeting the Union President on a weekly basis. The nature of this support was typified in the following response,

*“If you asked anyone what their primary role was in the organisation, they would say that it’s to make the officers shine. Therefore our key staff members’ job descriptions are about working with the officers to enable them to execute their roles really well”*

Each Union also differentiated between ongoing one-to-one support for individual officers, and broader team planning and review of projects or events that officers may have undertaken with staff support. One respondent felt that most effective feedback came “at the planning stage” of a project as officers tended to “bring the ideas and then look for support in delivery”.

Another respondent supplemented the regular one-to-one support with a mid-year review “involving some giving and receiving of feedback to each other in a structured environment”. This process was aimed at establishing “a consensus over what’s happened so far, and over what still needs to be done”. The view was that this process was quite important within the feedback culture as it could,

*“make or break the rest of the year, by allowing the second half of the year to focus on results that leave impact and a legacy”*

*Q4b: In what ways do your officers receive regular feedback and support about their performance as trustees?*

There was generally less focus on providing regular feedback and support about performance as a trustee. One Union had recognised this and planned to put in place greater mentoring between the officers and the lay trustees to “Pass on experience and guidance”. Another respondent said that they provided particular

support to the President in their capacity as chair of the Trustees, but that this came through the one-to-one feedback and support processes referred to above rather than a discrete support exercise focussed on the trustee role.

#### **4.4.4 Commentary**

Across the research methods the responses unambiguously highlight the importance of this element in an effective performance management procedure for both the officer role and the trustee dimension. “Feedback culture” ranked first overall in the DLA, and each SCQ question stressed the importance of continuous feedback and support in making those processes effective. Key within the feedback culture in delivering an effective process is the existence of regular 1-2-1 meetings with the Union’s senior member of staff. Where no review process existed, 80% of respondents thought a 1-2-1 meeting ought to be a component of any introduced PM system. Less popular was the notion of an annual performance review meeting, often a key staple of the literature’s view of effective PA/PM (Hannay, 2010; Armstrong, 2001; Bell, 1994). However, the need for a feedback culture to be present is deemed more central to the success of PA/PM (Kuvaas, 2011; Heathfield, 2007), and other authors, including those who see a role for an annual appraisal meeting, highlighted the option of continual review (Boselie, 2010, Hannay, 2010; Bell 1994).

The SSI responses all offered support for creating a feedback culture, with a clear commitment to providing ongoing support and development for individuals as both officers and trustees. This drive is reminiscent of Pointon’s (2010) “conversation with a purpose” model for performance managing volunteers and trustees, and on the basis of the research findings would appear to have merit for Sabbatical Officers on

both sides of their responsibilities, not just in their trustee role. The two-way review with the chair is replaced by the 1-2-1 conversation with the senior staff member, but the practice of giving constructive feedback on competencies, discussing development needs and identifying future aspirations (Pointon, 2010) are all at the centre of the processes described by the SSI respondents. It would appear that if nothing else takes place to review officer performance, or no other enabling criteria is present, then creating a culture of continuous feedback typified by these “conversations with a purpose” ought to be a priority.

## 4.5 MOTIVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

### 4.5.1 Data Line Analysis results

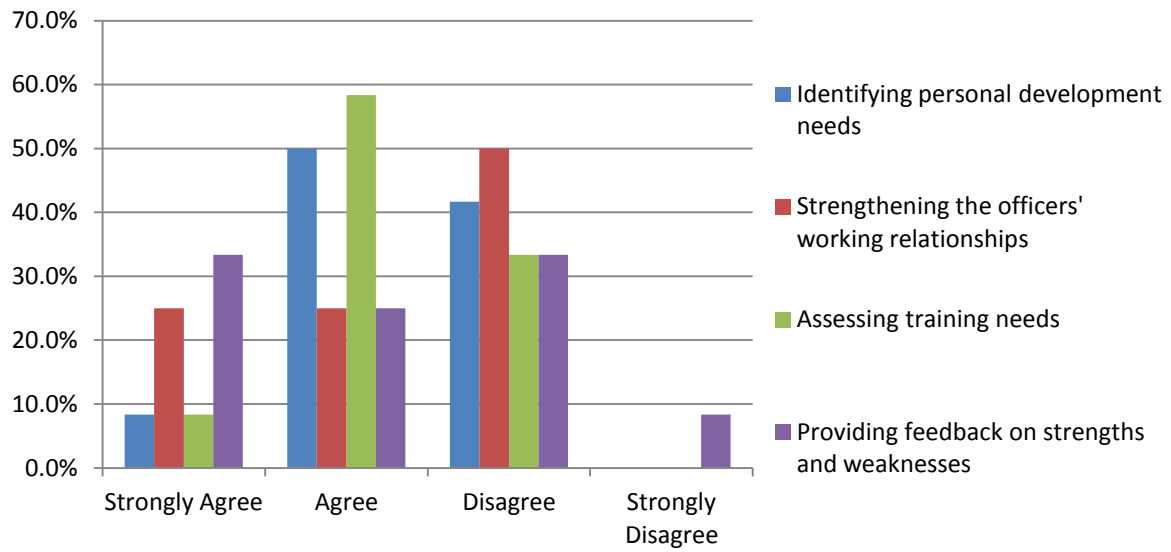
Statement	Overall Rank / 18	Officer Rank / 18	Staff Rank / 18
Feedback about strengths and weaknesses at the end of the process	9	4	12=
Identification of personal development needs at the end of the process	7	8=	8
Feedback to strengthen working relationships at the end of the process	6	3	9
Assessment of future training needs	11	6	10

### 4.5.2 Self Completion Questionnaire Results

*Question 3h, 3i, 3j and 3k*

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The democratic processes in our Union effectively review Sabbatical Officer performance by (h) indentifying personal development needs, (i) strengthening the officers' working relationships, (j) assessing training needs, and (k) providing feedback on strengths and weaknesses?*





#### Question 5d and 5e

**Which of the following features are present in the performance review process for Sabbatical Officers in your Union? (select all that apply)**

##### Answer Options

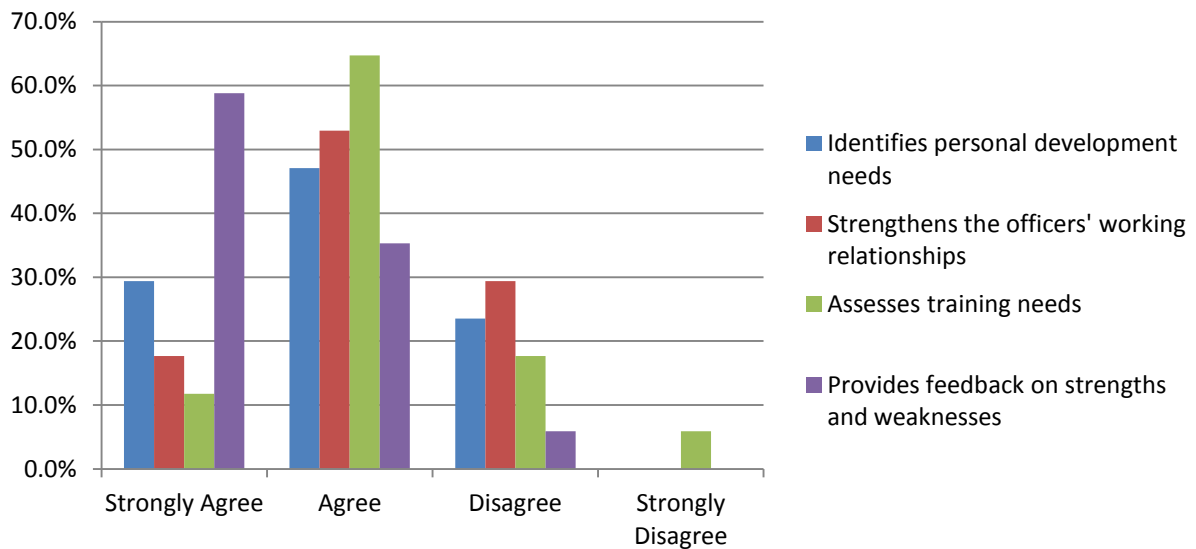
##### Present in our process

Identification of individual development needs  
Identification of individual training requirements

70.6%  
52.9%

### Question 7h, 7i, 7j and 7k

To what extent do you agree with the following statements: *The performance review process for Sabbatical Officers in our Union is effective because it (h) identifies personal development needs, (i) strengthens the officers' working relationships, (j) assesses training needs, and (k) provides feedback on strengths and weaknesses?*



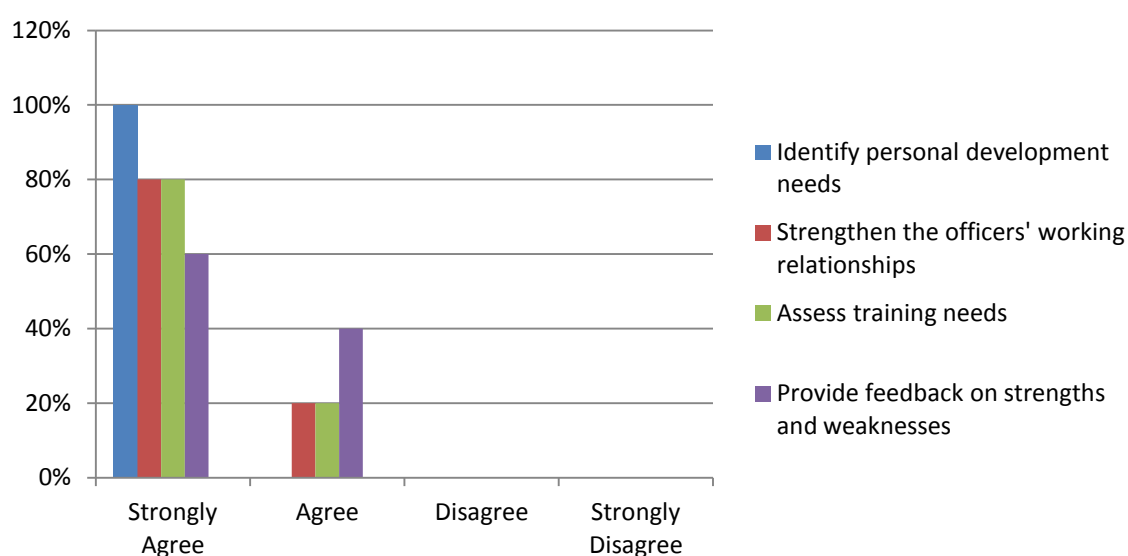
### Question 9d and 9e

If an officer review process were to be introduced to your Union, which of the following elements would you expect to see included? (select all that apply)

Answer Options	Ought to be included
Identification of individual development needs	100%
Identification of individual training requirements	80%

### Question 11h, 11i, 11j, and 11k

To what extent do you agree with the following statements: *If an officer review process were to be introduced into our Union, it should (h) indentify personal development needs, (i) strengthen the officers' working relationships, (j) assess training needs, and (k) provide feedback on strengths and weaknesses?*



### 4.5.3 Semi Structured Interview Results

*Q5: In reviewing officer performance, what aspects of their work should be focussed on?*

There was some variation in response to this question. One interviewee framed their response on the basis that officers often get elected to their posts and become “accidental trustees” – they do not run for office to achieve that role, and therefore the end up having to do things that they were often not expecting to. At the same time, the organisation expects a lot of the officers in return. Therefore feedback and review should focus on trying to understand the challenges officers face and how the organisation should best support the officers to meet those challenges. The interviewee was of the view that when the organisation fails to do that well, it risks the officers disengaging from their role as they cannot cope with the enormity of the

task as they do not necessarily have the variety of life skills and experience to cope. Therefore performance review becomes about making the right interventions at the right time.

Another interviewee took a similar stance, but from a more positive point of view. They started from a position of trying to understand what skills and achievements an officer wanted to be able to evidence at the end of their year. In doing so, the organisation could then map those to the activities the organisation is pursuing through its strategic plan, and enable the officers to lead and participate in those activities in order to undergo the personal development they are seeking. These developmental points are then focussed on as and when activities and projects come under review.

The final interviewee felt that it was impossible to identify fixed aspects as it needed to be set on an individual basis, dependent on the officer in question. That organisation had tended to focus on the issues and skills that were of interest to a particular officer and then attempted to bring those to the fore through regular review meetings, and the use of an external coach,. The respondent did note that of their current officer team, they had struggled to identify what motivated two of its members, largely because the officers were not cooperative with the review process. The respondent indicated that without officer cooperation, and given the leadership position the officers hold in the organisation, it was all but impossible to make this developmental review process work.

#### **4.5.4 Commentary**

This element of the CF was intended to be a “functional” element, something that should happen as part of a PA process for Sabbatical Officers. The DLA indicated

that feedback about an individual's motivation and development was important with three of the four statements ranking in the top half of the exercise and the fourth statement ranking just below. This view was supported by the later questions in the SCQ, particularly where no review process existed, all the respondents thought feedback about strengths and weaknesses, identifying personal development needs, strengthening working relationships, and assessing training needs ought to be included. This supported Hannay's (2010) model that these components were essential in a well rounded developmental PA (as opposed to evaluative PA) process.

However, there was little sense that these components were catered for within reviews of officer performance provided by the democratic structures. Little more than 50% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the process gave an effective review of performance by focussing on motivation and development factors. Potentially, this could indicate that the democratic processes offer more evaluative reviews of officer performance, focussing on what they have or have not achieved, rather than the way in which they achieved them. This would appear to be supported by the responses to the questions about reviews outside of the democratic process where 71% indicated that identification of development needs were the focus of these reviews. Also, these reviews were felt to be effective because they focussed on the development and motivation aspects of officers' work. 76% agreed or strongly agreed that the processes were effective because they identified development needs; 70% because they strengthened working relationships; 76% because they assessed training needs; and 94 because they provided feedback on strengths and weaknesses.

The SSI responses were overwhelmingly supportive of these findings, suggesting that personal development of the officers should be the key focus of any PA / PM process. The combination of this evidence is supportive of the view of Chen et al (2011) that organisational performance improves as employees own performance improves, and that this is achieved through regular reviews of the way in which people work rather than an evaluation of outputs. It almost goes without saying that the developmental support of Sabbatical Officers has to be indelibly linked to the previous component about the presence of a feedback culture in the organisation.

## 4.6 TRUSTEE ROLE

### 4.6.1 Data Line Analysis results

Statement	Overall Rank / 18	Officer Rank / 18	Staff Rank / 18
Assessment of contribution to strategic objectives	8	11	4
Assessment of business judgement skills	18	18	18
Assessment of practising good governance	16	15	16
Assessment of ability to manage relationships	12	10	12=

### 4.6.2 Self Completion Questionnaire Results

#### Question 12

Assuming that at least some of the Sabbatical Officers in your Union are also Trustees, does your Union review their performance as Trustees?	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Yes	40.9%
No	59.1%

#### Question 13

If Officers' performance as Trustees is reviewed, does this take place individually, in the context of a Board review or in some other format?	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Individual Review	44.4%
Board Review	22.2%
Other	33.3%

### Example responses under Q13 “Other”

The officers complete the 360 TRAP model designed to cover the Trustee, Representation, Activist and Portfolio of the Officer. So the Trustee bit of the role is reviewed separate from the Board.
Via 1:1's with senior staff or via external mentors
We do Board review - externally facilitated. Chief Exec also meets 3 times a year with different Trustee groups (student, sabbatical and external) to review their experience and seek to improve it

### Question 14

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that Sabbatical Officers who are trustees should be assessed against the following competencies:**

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Setting the organisation's vision, values & purpose	4	5	0	0
Identifying resources required to deliver the vision	4	2	3	0
Thinking & planning strategically	6	3	0	0
Weighing evidence & analysing ideas	4	5	0	0
Reaching independent & objective conclusions	4	5	0	0
Understanding complex financial information	3	3	2	1
Assimilating information quickly	3	5	1	0
Acting with integrity & probity	7	2	0	0
Working supportively & building Board cohesion	4	4	1	0
Constructively probing, challenging, & adding value to organisational performance & direction	7	2	0	0



### Question 15

Thinking about these trustee capabilities, how important do you believe them to be to the wider role of a Sabbatical Officer?				
Answer Options	Very Important	Important	Unimportant	Very unimportant
Setting the organisation's vision, values & purpose	7	2	0	0
Identifying resources required to deliver the vision	3	2	4	0
Thinking & planning strategically	3	6	0	0
Weighing evidence & analysing ideas	3	6	0	0
Reaching independent & objective conclusions	4	5	0	0
Understanding complex financial information	1	3	4	1
Assimilating information quickly	3	6	0	0
Acting with integrity & probity	8	1	0	0
Working supportively & building Board cohesion	2	6	1	0
Constructively probing, challenging, & adding value to organisational performance & direction	7	2	0	0

### 4.6.3 Semi Structured Interview Results

*Q6a In reviewing officer performance as trustees, what aspects of the trustee role should be focussed upon?*

Two respondents felt that a straightforward answer to this question was whether the trustees had fulfilled their legal duty to protect the interests of the organisation, and in doing so, to assess “how the organisation is making life better for students”. In exercising the legal duty, and protecting the organisation’s mission it was therefore deemed possible to focus performance review on how the trustees had managed “risk, strategy, governance and organisational oversight”. However it was also suggested that as charity law requires a trustee board to take collective responsibility, then the review of performance must be undertaken in a collective way so as not to single out individual trustees.

The third respondent voiced similar views but noted that,

*“it is hard to ask officers to be excellent trustees within a year. They didn’t get elected to be trustees but to be student leaders and therefore are not often equipped with the skills to instantly be a good trustee”*

The respondent’s view was that induction and training could provide the framework for setting out what gets reviewed, but that when the individual is only likely to be a trustee for a year, is it worth investing six months in an induction process to develop a great trustee?

*Q6b How do the officers’ trustee responsibilities enable or constrain any performance management process a Union may seek to put in place?*

There was a general consensus amongst respondents that the trustee role enabled performance management processes rather than constraining them. One respondent felt that officers saw being a trustee the more important element of their officer role, and therefore put good performance as a trustee above doing what they wanted to as an officer. This was described as

*“the officers have used the trustee dimension to become better at self policing their officer role, and therefore have enabled their own performance management”*

Another respondent felt that the trustee responsibilities enabled performance management as it enabled the officers to “see their role in the context of the whole organisation” and therefore could recognise that the key element of what their year in office should focus on what “ensuring the effectiveness of the whole organisation”. This enabled them to see that performance management was not a personal attach but critically linked to organisational performance.

The final respondent provided an apt summary,

*“if the organisational culture is reasonably positive and values officers and their roles, and that value is well embedded, and if officers and managers retain good relationships, then the trustee role places no constraints on performance management”*

#### **4.6.4 Commentary**

The findings about the trustee dimension of the CF show a variety of opinions. The DLA results would indicate that the trustee competencies are of low priority in the overall mix of elements in creating a review process for Sabbatical Officers with only “assessment of contribution to strategic objectives” ranking above half way. Overall, the four statements about trustee competencies combined to be the sixth lowest ranking of the six elements tested in the DLA. This perhaps indicates that they were not seen as essential criteria in structuring PA for Sabbatical Officers when compared to the other “enabling” criteria of the CF.

The SCQ responses gave more depth to the low ranking of these elements in the DLA. Only 41% of respondents indicated that their organisation reviewed the trustee dimension of Sabbatical Officers’ performance, and there was no consensus over the method used: individual review, collaborative board review or some other means. The methods highlighted in the “other” comments corroborate what was discussed in the SSIs – that different review methodologies are adopted on a Union by Union basis. The “TRAP” model referred to in the “other” comments is the basis of the 360 review model discussed by two respondents to the SSIs. In this process the “trustee” competencies combine with other elements of the officer role (“representative”, “activist” and “portfolio”) to be measured in a multi-rater exercise. The two Unions in

the SSIs who used this approach operated it in slightly different ways, but aimed at providing officers with feedback on their strengths, weaknesses and development needs. This is akin to the philosophy behind the “Motivation and Development” component of the CF discussed in section 4.5 above, and which features significantly in the Hannay (2010) model.

Conversely, through the SSIs it was also considered that the legal requirements of the role of a trustee, as set out in the NCVO/Charity Commission (2010/2008) guidance documents, offers a good framework for assessing performance. The standards can be reviewed in “meets / does not meet” manner by the trustee themselves or by the board collectively, though ultimately the NCVO/Charity Commission guidance is intended as best practice rather than an absolute performance measure.

Other questions from the SCQs supported the view that the competencies offer structure to the performance review needs of Officers. From those respondents who reviewed trustee performance, there was significant commitment to the need to assess officers against those competencies. In response to the question “*To what extent do you agree or disagree that Sabbatical Officers who are trustees should be assessed against the following competencies...*” a majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all the statements. This would appear to discount the view espoused in the SSIs in section 4.1 that some officers see the trustee dimension as a “necessary evil” that they have to put up with, as the results would indicate that there is an acceptance of the competencies, possibly as far as adopting them as performance measures. There was also a high degree of support for the competencies in the question “*thinking about these trustee capabilities, how*

*important do you believe them to be to the wider role of a Sabbatical Officer?"* A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all the competencies bar "understanding complex financial information" being important to the wider role of a Sabbatical Officer. This could be a manifestation of the reality that most Unions employ at least one senior manager in the role of Director or Chief Executive who is usually responsible for possessing that level of understanding on the organisation's behalf, and translating it into meaningful information for the trustees to consider.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The following conclusions have been drawn from the findings presented in chapter 4 and are discussed in relation to the research objectives and presented in declining order of significance.

**Objective 1: To investigate the optimum elements required in structuring performance appraisal of Sabbatical Officer roles outside of the democratic process.**

1. The research was unambiguously clear about the desirability of a culture of feedback being cultivated in any appraisal process. Key to this culture in terms of officer PA/PM was the existence of regular 1-2-1 meetings between individual officers and the senior member of Union staff with much less support for an annual performance appraisal meeting. It would be fair to conclude that a traditional annual PA meeting would serve little benefit in a context where the appraisee is in post for one year: the ongoing narrative that develops across PA review meetings over a period of time would be absent. Consequently, the desire for the feedback culture to be focussed around 1-2-1 review meetings makes an abundance of sense – each meeting could effectively be a mini PA meeting in order to maximise the officer's effectiveness in any given year. Harder to reconcile would be the need to adopt a multi-rater approach to collating feedback. Clearly this would not be feasible to conduct on a monthly basis, but could be factored in a couple of times a year at suitable intervals so as to have a useful outcome for the Officers' personal development.
2. The findings were equally unambiguous that a key foundation of an Officer performance appraisal was the need to set clear objectives at the start of the period in office. The strong support in all the forms of research for clarity of

objectives demonstrates a wide acceptance and degree of comfort with this part of the process. The key issue is that it needs to be adjusted to the organisational context, and there is a benefit to developing a process where officers' objectives can link closely to the wider Union strategic plan. The findings also indicated that within the democratic processes, the effectiveness of any officer review was often hampered by the lack of clarity surrounding objectives and roles. Therefore in structuring a review process beyond the democratic structures, this element should be a key priority with clear objectives set at the start of the year based on a shared understanding of the role between officers and the organisation itself.

3. There was an undeniably strong conclusion to be drawn from the research that any form of Officer PA outside of the democratic processes should have a developmental (as opposed to evaluative) focus. In doing so, the elements of the Hannay (2010) model were strongly supported as being appropriate to focus upon. Therefore any PA process for Sabbatical Officers should have at its core a structure that enables feedback on strengths and weaknesses, personal development needs, how to strengthen working relationships, and an assessment of training needs.
4. There was general agreement on the desirability of putting in place a multi-source / multi-rater approach when designing an appraisal process for Officers. The absence of multi-rater approaches was seen as diminishing the effectiveness of any form of appraisal of performance inside or outside of the democratic structure. However, the research also indicated that where 360 processes were in place, they had the potential to be seen as "take it or leave



it” approaches by the recipients. Therefore there has to be some question over whether a formal 360 approach coupled with a feedback / review meeting as discussed in the literature is appropriate in this context. Clearly, the objectivity of the responses is desirable, but potentially the process itself is less necessary than the need to establish a supportive feedback culture.

5. Given the emphasis the research placed on the “Motivation and Development” criteria, it would be logical to accept that the best way to test those elements would be through an objective review of data compiled from multiple sources. Accepting the leadership position occupied by the Officers in the organisation, the most appropriate way to acquire that data would have to be through a confidential 360 degree multi-rater approach. The existence of the 360 degree “TRAP” model cited by some respondents suggests that there is a framework available for development.
6. The research findings would appear to indicate that procedural justice is not regarded as an important element in structuring Sabbatical Officer appraisal when compared to some of the other components discussed. However, it would be unwise to forge ahead with devising an appraisal process for Officers without taking this into account. The research would seem to indicate that procedural justice is taken for granted across the variety of review processes that exist in the surveyed organisations and is therefore deemed an important part of the process anyway. Even where it was indicated that review processes operated without a formal statement of procedural justice, there was a commitment to not ignoring it and trying to build it into the philosophy adopted.

**Objective 2: To critically evaluate how the requirements of the trustee role affect the performance management needs of Sabbatical Officers.**

1. The key finding is a general consensus that, there should be no need for the trustee role to limit any aspect of Sabbatical Officers' PM needs. Providing that there is a commitment to exhibiting the enabling criteria of the CF in any PM process, a culture of trust and feedback could be developed that allows the trustee role to enhance the performance of Officers rather than constrain it. The research indicated that, in general, the trustee role is not being appraised as a discrete function of the Sabbatical Officer responsibilities.
2. It is possible to conclude that developing a PA process that incorporated the measurable requirements of being a trustee into the wider aspects of Officer responsibilities and performance should create a more rounded and beneficial PA process for the individual. Indeed, the research demonstrated that at least two organisations had developed such a process for their officers (the TRAP model), reviewing their performance as a trustee (T) alongside their performance as elected representatives (R), political activists (A) and in executing the requirements of their portfolios (P). The basic information uncovered about this model would seem to indicate that it has attempted to answer both the questions posed in this research, and would therefore be worthy of further investigation in any future research undertaken on this issue.
3. In analysing the trustee competencies, the research demonstrated a general acceptance that the assessment of these competencies would contribute to an effective review of Sabbatical Officer performance. This is possibly due to an understanding of the strategic nature of the trustee competencies, and the

wider benefit the organisation can derive from the Officers displaying these competencies in their day to day roles.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Further critical evaluation is required on the effectiveness of the TRAP model identified through the research methods, particularly over whether it provides a satisfactory review process of both the trustee role and the Sabbatical Officer duties. Additionally, it would be useful to test whether this model is able to evidence positive outcomes for the individuals on the receiving end of the review, and what organisational benefit has been derived from its introduction.

Further research could also be conducted specifically with Sabbatical Officers (as opposed to senior staff members) as to what personal development they believed that they derived from their period of office, and whether there is any difference in outcome for Officers in Unions where a formal PA/PM structure was in place as against those Unions where the process is more informal.

Finally, further research could be conducted on establishing appropriate performance measures for Sabbatical Officers, particularly based on impact and outcomes linked to the wider strategic plan of the Students' Union.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Taking into account the conclusions drawn in chapter five, the following recommendations are presented in declining order of importance.

1. As part of the induction process for new Sabbatical Officers, USSU should set out how and when they will receive feedback on their performance, the reasons for doing so, and the criteria that will be used. This process should be undertaken by the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive, and should include reference to the Officers' role as a trustee.
2. As part of the induction process for new Sabbatical Officers, USSU should ensure that they create a set of individual and/or team objectives to govern their work for their period of office. The objectives should be demonstrably linked to the wider USSU strategic plan, and should be SMART in nature. Each officer should be paired with one of the Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive to develop the action plans behind the objectives, and the action plans should form the basis of ongoing performance review. The action plans should be reported into both the Trustee Board and the democratic structure to ensure that all stakeholders understand the Officers' work plans.
3. The Chief Executive should identify a regular set of 1-2-1 meetings across the year with the four Sabbatical Officers. The meetings should be structured to discuss the following:
  - a. Performance against objectives, focussed as much on "how" they are being achieved as on any measurable outcomes

- b. Motivation and development issues, including self assessment by the officers of their strengths / weaknesses and personal development needs.
  - c. Performance against the key NCVO/Charity Commission trustee competencies by reviewing participation at the most recent Trustee Board meeting.
- 4. Initiate a project to create an adapted version of USSU's management team 360 appraisal process. The project should:
  - a. Undertake an investigation of the "TRAP" review model to assess its usefulness and applicability to the USSU operating context and culture
  - b. Taking that model into account, identify the key competencies and capabilities required for USSU Sabbatical Officers to make a positive contribution to students' lives. Consideration should be given as to whether these competencies should include the trustee dimension or not.
  - c. Agree the competencies and capabilities with the Officers so that they buy into the process
  - d. Identify the range of respondents from whom the Officers could draw responses
  - e. Identify an appropriate timetable for implementing the 360 review
- 5. Utilise the NCVO/Charity Commission framework to ensure that the Trustee Board reviews its collective performance at least once a year, either within the

timeframe of a particular meeting or at a separate event. The Chief Executive should also offer opportunities for individual trustees outside of the Sabbatical Officer team to meet him and the President (as Chair of the Board) to discuss the effectiveness of their contribution to the Board through the “conversation with a purpose” model (Pointon, 2010).

Table 6.1 below sets out an implementation plan for these recommendations.

<b>TASK</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>LEAD PERSON</b>	<b>TIME REQUIRED</b>	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b>	<b>COST</b>
Creating a feedback cycle for Sabbatical Officers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify how and when Officers will receive feedback on their performance</li> <li>2. Identify the reasons for providing feedback</li> <li>3. Identify the criteria that will be used</li> </ol>	CEO / Deputy CEO	1 induction session	By 1 July 2012	3 x hours of CEO time = £111 3 x hours of DCEO time = £68 12 hours of officer time (4 officers x 3 hour induction session) = £111
Objective setting exercise	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discussion of strategic plan during induction process</li> <li>2. Team planning exercise during residential training event</li> <li>3. Individual follow up meetings with each officer</li> <li>4. Production of objectives</li> <li>5. Report to Trustees / student committees</li> </ol>	CEO / Deputy CEO	2 hour induction session 3 x 3 hour sessions at residential 2 follow ups per officer x 2 hours	By 1 September 2012	13 hours of CEO time = £481 13 hours of DCEO time = £293 52 x Officer hours = £480
1-2-1 meeting schedule	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set dates of regular 1-2-1 meeting with each Officer for the 2012/13 year</li> <li>2. Provide officers with agenda in advance</li> <li>3. Prepare for each meeting</li> </ol>	CEO	8 x 2 hour meetings a year for each officer	Booked by 1 September 2012 Meetings started by 15 October 2012	64 hours of CEO time = £2,373 64 hours of Officer time = £591
Develop a 360 review process for officers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the TRAP model at Liverpool John Moores and UCLAN</li> <li>2. If suitable, adapt TRAP model for USSU use</li> </ol>	Deputy CEO	2 x half day review of TRAP model 2-3 days work on adaptation of TRAP or	December 2012	5.5 days of DCEO time = £867



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Alternatively, adapt USSU management team capabilities to meet Officer needs</li> <li>4. Agree capabilities / competencies with Officers</li> <li>5. Identify range of respondents</li> <li>6. Identify timetable for launch</li> </ul>		<p>management model</p> <p>0.5 day discussion with officers</p>		
Trustee Board performance review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discussion item on Board agenda about performance review</li> <li>2. Agree timetable and use of NCVO / Charity Commission capabilities</li> <li>3. Review takes place at agreed meeting or other event</li> <li>4. Review outcomes and feed into review and development of trustee induction training</li> </ul>	CEO	1 day total spread across several meetings	June 2013	1 day of CEO time = £260
Individual Trustee reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Offer individual “conversations with a purpose” for all trustees with CEO and Chair of Board</li> <li>2. Set out “conversation with purpose” agenda in advance</li> <li>3. Hold meetings as requested</li> <li>4. Review outcomes and feed into review and development of trustee induction training</li> </ul>	CEO / SU President	1-2 hours per trustee (8 trustees who are not Sabbatical Officers)	June 2013	<p>16 hours of CEO time = £593</p> <p>16 hours of President time = £147</p>

Table 6.1 Implementation Plan for Research Recommendations

## **APPENDIX ONE**

### **DATA LINE ANALYSIS RESULTS**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Overall Rank</b>	<b>Officer Rank</b>	<b>Staff Rank</b>
a. Transparency of the process	15	17	14
b. Fairness of the process	13	16	11
c. Confidentiality of the process	10	13=	5
d. Focussed objectives set at the start of the process	3	8=	2
e. Clarity of job role confirmed at the start of the process	2	1	3
f. Identification of development needs at the start of the process	5	7	7
g. A culture of continuous feedback and support throughout the process	1	2	1
h. A jointly agreed process for collecting information about performance	14	12	15
i. Feedback collated from multiple work contacts	4	5	6
j. An annual performance review meeting	17	13=	17
k. Feedback about strengths and weaknesses at the end of the process	9	4	12=
l. Identification of personal development needs at the end of the process	7	8=	8
m. Feedback to strengthen working relationships at the end of the process	6	3	9
n. Assessment of future training needs	11	6	10
o. Assessment of contribution to strategic objectives	8	11	4
p. Assessment of business judgement skills	18	18	18
q. Assessment of practising good governance	16	15	16
r. Assessment of ability to manage relationships	12	10	12=

**APPENDIX TWO**

**SELF COMPLETION QUESTIONNAIRES**

## Sabbatical Officer Performance Appraisal Part Two

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. The survey comes in two parts and relates to an MBA research project about performance appraisal processes for Sabbatical Officers in Students' Unions.

The research project is seeking to test the following notions:

- 1) Do Union democratic processes provide an adequate forum for reviewing Sabbatical Officer performance?
- 2) What are the key components of a performance review process for Sabbatical Officers?
- 3) How does the role & responsibilities of being a Trustee fit into such a process?

This questionnaire is part two of two, and will ask you your opinions of appraisal processes in general, and for elected Sabbatical Officers in particular.

Completing the questionnaire should take no longer than 15 minutes.

Thank you again for your time

Phil Benton  
Chief Executive  
University of Salford Students' Union

**\*1. Are you:**

- ☐ A Sabbatical Officer
- ☐ A Senior Students' Union Staff Member

**\*2. Within your Students' Union, does the democratic structure provide an opportunity to review the performance of the Sabbatical Officers?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**\*3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: The democratic processes in our Union effectively review Sabbatical Officer performance by....**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Being a confidential process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Offering a fair and transparent process for the officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assessing performance against clearly agreed criteria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basing observations on clear understanding of the officers' roles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing continuous feedback and support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilising objectively collated information and data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilising feedback from multiple sources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying personal development needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strengthening the officers' working relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assessing training needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing feedback on strengths and weaknesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)



**\*4. Does your Union provide a performance review / appraisal process for Sabbatical Officers outside of the democratic structure?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**\*5. Which of the following features are present in the performance review process for Sabbatical Officers in your Union? (select all that apply)**  
**Also, which one feature would you consider to be the most important? (select only one)**

	Present in our process
Objective / goal setting at the start of the officer year	<input type="radio"/>
Creation of an individual officer action plan	<input type="radio"/>
Creation of an officer team action plan	<input type="radio"/>
Identification of individual development needs	<input type="radio"/>
Identification of individual training requirements	<input type="radio"/>
Regular 1-2-1 meetings between an officer and the senior staff member throughout the year	<input type="radio"/>
Formal gathering of feedback from multiple sources / individuals	<input type="radio"/>
Formal review meeting between an officer and the senior staff member to discuss feedback	<input type="radio"/>
Exit interview at the end of the officer year	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

**\*6. Which one of those elements would you consider to be the most important?**

**\*7. To what extent do you agree with the following statements: The performance review process for Sabbatical Officers in our Union is effective because it....**

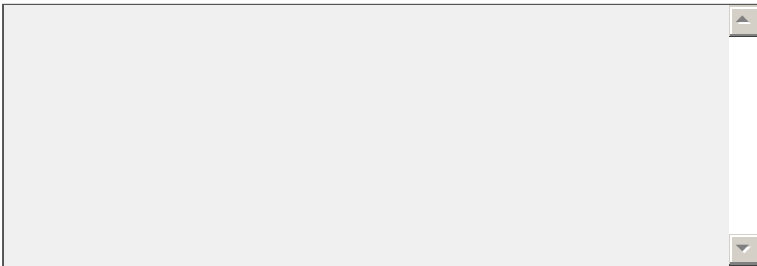
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Is a confidential process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Offers a fair and transparent process for the officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assesses performance against clearly agreed criteria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bases observations on clear understanding of the officers' roles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provides continuous feedback and support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilises objectively collated information and data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilises feedback from multiple sources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifies personal development needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strengthens the officers' working relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assesses training needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provides feedback on strengths and weaknesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

**\*8. If your Union does not provide a performance review / appraisal process for Sabbatical Officers outside of the democratic structure, why do you think this is the case?**

- ☐ Reviewing officer performance is not the responsibility of the organisation
- ☐ Reviewing officer performance is the responsibility of the officers themselves
- ☐ Reviewing officer performance is the responsibility of the democratic structure
- ☐ Some other reason

Other (please specify)



**\*9. If an officer review process were to be introduced to your Union, which of the following elements would you expect to see included? (select all that apply)**

	Ought to be included
Objective / goal setting at the start of the officer year	<input type="radio"/>
Creation of an individual officer action plan	<input type="radio"/>
Creation of an officer team action plan	<input type="radio"/>
Identification of individual development needs	<input type="radio"/>
Identification of individual training requirements	<input type="radio"/>
Regular 1-2-1 meetings between an officer and the senior staff member throughout the year	<input type="radio"/>
Formal gathering of feedback from multiple sources / individuals	<input type="radio"/>
Formal review meeting between an officer and the senior staff member to discuss feedback	<input type="radio"/>
Exit interview at the end of the officer year	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

**\*10. Which one of those elements would you consider to be the most important?**

**\*11. To what extent do you agree with the following statements: If an officer review process were to be introduced into our Union, it should....**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Be a confidential process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Offer a fair and transparent process for the officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assess performance against clearly agreed criteria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Base observations on clear understanding of the officers' roles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide continuous feedback and support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilise objectively collated information and data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilise feedback from multiple sources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify personal development needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strengthen the officers' working relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assess training needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide feedback on strengths and weaknesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\*12. Assuming that at least some of the Sabbatical Officers in your Union are also Trustees, does your Union review their performance as Trustees?**

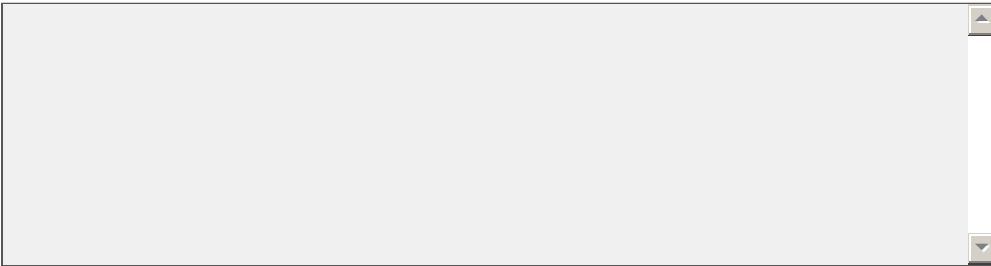
☐ Yes

☐ No

**\*13. If Officers' performance as Trustees is reviewed, does this take place individually, in the context of a Board review or in some other format?**

- ☐ Individual Review
- ☐ Board Review
- ☐ Other

Other (please specify)





**\*14. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Sabbatical Officers who are trustees should be assessed against the following competencies:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Setting the organisation's vision, values & purpose	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying resources required to deliver the vision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thinking & planning strategically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weighing evidence & analysing ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reaching independent & objective conclusions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding complex financial information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assimilating information quickly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acting with integrity & probity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working supportively & building Board cohesion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Constructively probing, challenging, & adding value to organisational performance & direction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\*15. Thinking about these trustee capabilities, how important do you believe them to be to the wider role of a Sabbatical Officer?**

	Very Important	Important	Unimportant	Very unimportant
Setting the organisation's vision, values & purpose	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying resources required to deliver the vision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thinking & planning strategically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weighing evidence & analysing ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reaching independent & objective conclusions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding complex financial information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assimilating information quickly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acting with integrity & probity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working supportively & building Board cohesion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Constructively probing, challenging, & adding value to organisational performance & direction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\*16. Finally, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following comments about Sabbatical Officer performance review?**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
An officer's performance as a trustee is more important than their performance as an officer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An effective performance review process creates effective Sabbatical Officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. Please rest assured that all the information in the survey is confidential, and will only be used for the purposes of my research paper.

Phil Benton  
Chief Executive  
University of Salford Students' Union

## **APPENDIX THREE**

### **SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## **SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Objective 1**

To investigate the optimum elements required in structuring performance appraisal of Sabbatical Officer roles outside of the democratic process

### **Objective 2**

To critically evaluate how the requirements of the trustee role affect the performance management needs of Sabbatical Officers.

### **Procedural Justice**

Q1a: How does your Union ensure that the process of reviewing the officers' performance is fair and transparent?

Q1b. How does your Union offer a fair and transparent process for reviewing the officers' performance as trustees?

### **Clarity of Objectives**

Q2a: How does your Union ensure that it provides clear, focussed objectives for Sabbatical Officers at the start of their term in office?

Q2b: How does your Union ensure that it provides clear, focussed objectives for Sabbatical Officers in executing their role as trustees?

### **Objective Data**

Q3a: How does your Union ensure that when reviewing officer performance, it objectively collates information and data? What sources does this come from?

Q3b: In reviewing officer performance as trustees, how does your Union ensure that it objectively collates information and data?

## **Feedback Culture**

Q4a: How does your Union create a culture where officers can receive regular feedback and support about their performance? What typifies this culture?

Q4b: In what ways do your officers receive regular feedback and support about their performance as trustees?

## **Motivation and Development**

Q5: In reviewing officer performance, what aspects of their work should be focussed on?

## **Trustee Role**

Q6a In reviewing officer performance as trustees, what aspects of the trustee role should be focussed upon?

Q6b How do the officers' trustee responsibilities enable or constrain any performance management process a Union may seek to put in place?

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